OPINION 6

TIME TO RECONCILE

KASHMIRI PANDITS

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ALABAMA SHOOTING

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NEW DELHI, MONDAY APRIL 17, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3

CBI grills Kejriwal for nine hrs in excise policy case

Was asked 56 questions, says Delhi CM after leaving agency HQ

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Sunday grilled Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for nearly nine hours in the excise policy case. As Kejriwal's quizzing was

underway, his party held protests outside the agency's office even as the AAP chief accused the CBI of acting at the behest of the BJP. After his grilling, Kejriwal

said the CBI asked him around 56 questions regarding the excise policy case and he answered them all. "I want to say that the

entire excise policy case is false. They do not have any evidence that the AAP is wrong. It's a result of dirty politics," he told reporters.

He was speaking to the media at his residence late at night after being released by the



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal along with Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann, party's Rajya Sabha MPs Sanjay Singh and Raghav Chadha leaves his residence to appear before the CBI for questioning in the now-scrapped liquor policy case, in New Ranjan Dimri I Pioneei

Thanking the CBI officials for their "hospitality", the Delhi CM said, "They asked me questions in a friendly and harmonious manner. I answered

all the questions asked by them.The CBI asked around 56 after Kejriwal's questioning the CBI said it recorded his questions regarding the excise policy, including when and

why the policy was started." In a statement released

In-charge of Excise, GNCT of

to private persons, it said.

Continued on Page 2

3-member judicial panel set up to probe don's killing

Atiq, Ashraf buried; three assailants sent to 14-days' judicial custody

PNS/PTI ■ LUCKNOW / PRAYAGRAJ

On a day gangster-politician Atiq Ahmad and his brother Khalid Azeem alias Ashraf were buried in the Kasari Masari graveyard in their native village in Uttar Pradesh (UP) the State Government constituted a three-member judicial commission to probe their killing on Saturday by four men posing as journalists. The commission will be headed by High Court Judge (retired) Arvind Kumar Tripathi, retired Judge Brijesh Kumar Soni and former DGP Subesh Kumar Singh. The commission will have to submit its report to the Government within two months, officials said on Sunday, adding the Home Department has constituted the panel under Commission of Inquiry Act,

Earlier, on Sunday a Prayagraj court sent Átiq Ahmad's three assailants Luvlesh Tiwari (22) of Banda, Mohit, alias Sunny, (23) of Hamirpur and Arun Kumar Maurya (18) of Kasganj to 14 days' judicial custody. The three were caught on the spot after shooting Atiq and his brother outside a hospital in the Shahganj area. The last rites of



following the killing of mafioso-turned-politician Atiq Ahmad and his brother Khalid Azim aka Ashraf, in Prayagraj on Sunday (Above); Combo photo of three men; (L-R) Arun Maurya, Sunny Purane and Lavlesh Tiwari, who opened fire at the duo while they were being taker for a medical checkup in Prayagraj (Right)

gunned down in a police encounter in Jhansi on April 13, were performed here just hours before Saturday's shooting. Three accused in Atiq Ashraf killing sent to 14 days'

judicial custody by a court here," lawyer Manish Khanna,

who represented Ahmad, said.

Ahmad's son Asad, who was

Meanwhile, patrolling was intensified on Sunday in Prayagraj's Chakiya area where Ahmad's house is located even as the UP police tightened security across the State. Prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) have been issued in all districts

of UP to prevent any untoward incident. Internet services remained shut in Prayagraj district as part of the security measures. Interestingly, just two weeks before his killing, the Supreme Court had dismissed Ahmad's plea seeking protection during his custody with the UP Police. *Continued on Page 2*

AAP leaders detained, party calls emergency meet of office-bearers

1,350 people detained for staging protest against CBI were released at night

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

he AAP on Sunday held an The AAP on Sunce, ...
"emergency meeting" of its office-bearers to decide the party's next course of action

"detained" while protesting against the CBI summoning Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in the excise policy case. "The Delhi Police has arrested us for sitting peacefully and is taking us to some unknown place... What kind of dictatorship is this?" Chadha tweeted in Hindi.

The AAP's Delhi unit con-Iqbal, the party's national sec-





AAP MPs Sanjay Singh and Raghav Chadha along with others being detained by police personnel during a protest against the questioning of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal by CBI, near the CBI headquarters in New Delhi on Sunday

after several top leaders were retary Pankaj Gupta and leader Jasmine Shah.

As many as 1,350 people including several senior AAP leaders were detained by the Delhi Police while they were staging a sit-in protest against Kejriwal's summoning in connection with the excise policy case. The detainees included Rajya Sabha MPs Sanjay Singh and Raghav Chadha, Delhi Atishi and Kailash Gahlot, AAP spokesperson Adil Ahmad Khan, its general secretary Pankaj Gupta and some Ministers in the Punjab

However, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, who also joined the sit-in on Archbishop Road, had left the spot before the other AAP leaders' detention.

The detainees were released by the police later in the night. While being released from the police station, the AAP leaders raised slogans against Prime Minister

Narendra Modi. The CBI summoned Kejriwal to its office to answer questions of the investigation team as a witness in the excise policy case, according to a notice issued by the agency.

statement in the case. The CBI had registered a case against the then Deputy

Chief Minister and Minister-Delhi and 14 others for investigation into the allegations of irregularities in framing and implementation of Excise Policy for the year 2021-22 and extending post tender benefits

Court issues summons to Kejriwal, Sanjay in Guj Univ defamation case

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

court in Ahmedabad has Aissued summons to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Keiriwal and Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) Singh in a criminal defamation complaint for their alleged sarcastic and derogatory statements against Gujarat University.

The court of Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Jayeshbhai Chovatiya on Saturday summoned the two AAP leaders on May 23, after observing that prima facie there appeared to be a case against them under Indian Penal Code Section 500 (defamation) on a complaint filed by the Guiarat University's

registrar Piyush Patel.

The court also ordered to delete 'Chief Minister' from Keiriwal's name in the cause title of the case, saying the statements were made by him in his personal capacity. Kejriwal and Singh had

made the comments after the

Gujarat High Court passed an

order setting aside the Chief Information Commissioner's order asking the Gujarat University (GU) to provide information on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's academic

As per the complainant, they made "defamatory" statements in press conferences and on Twitter handles targeting the university. Their comments hurt the prestige of the institution which has established its name among the public, he said.

The Gujarat University was established more than 70 years ago. It is reputed among the people and utterances by the accused will create mistrust about the university, the complainant's lawyer Amit Nair argued. The complainant alleged the statements were defamatory towards the university because they were sarcastic and intended to intentionally hurt the prestige of the university. They were shared in the media and on Twitter handles with the same intention, he

Opp parties demand SC-monitored probe

Opposition parties on Sunday came down heavily on the Yogi Adityanath-led (UP) Pradesh Government over the killing of gangster-turned-politician Atiq Ahmad, seeking a Supreme Court-monitored investigation and the resignation of the UP Chief Minister over the issue. While maintaining that criminals should be given the harshest of punishment, the Congress said it should be done under the rule of law and subverting or violating the rule of law was

dangerous for democracy.
"Whoever does this, or gives protection to those who do such acts, should also be held responsible and the law should be strictly enforced on them. It should be our collective endeavour to ensure that the judicial system and rule of law are at all times honoured in letter and spirit," Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh said.

Without taking names, in a tweet in Hindi, Priyanka Vadra said the law of the country was written in the Constitution and

'Whoever plays with or violates the rule of law and the judicial process or gives protection to those who indulge in such an act, should also be held responsible and the law should be strictly enforced on that person," be the endeavour of all that the justice system and the rule of law remained supreme in India.

AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi alleged that the UP Government had a role in the killings and demanded a Supreme Court-monitored investigation into the matter.

"No officer from Uttar Pradesh should be included in the committee. This was a coldblooded murder," he said adding people who were celebrating this killing are "vultures". Owaisi said that the inci-

dent raises a big question about the law and order situation in the State and demanded the resignation of Yogi Adityanath.

"I have always been saying that BIP in Uttar Pradesh is not running the Government by the rule of law but by the rule of gun," Owaisi said.

Continued on Page 2

MHA to prepare **SOPs for safety** of journalists

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Home Affairs has decided to prepare Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the safety of journalists in the wake of three assailants, posing as Atiq Åhmad and his brother Ashraf, in the middle of a media interaction, while police personnel were escorting them to a medical college for a

checkup, sources said. The MHA, under the leadership of the Prime Minister and guidance of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, will prepare the SOPs for the safety and security of journalists, official

sources said. The step is being taken after the three attackers struck in Prayagraj on Saturday night while Ahmad and his brother

were speaking to reporters. Raising questions about the vetting procedures of the UP Police of mediapersons present there, the three assailants who posed as jour-

nalists were even carrying video cameras, mikes and media identity cards.

CAPSULE

EIGHTY HELD FOR ILLICIT LIQUOR TRADE IN BIHAR Motihari/Patna: Police have arrested 80 people from East Champaran district of dry Bihar for allegedly being involved in spurious liquor trade, following a suspected hooch tragedy that claimed 14 lives so far in Motihari, officials said on Sunday, 11 police personne posted as in-charge of ALTF have been suspended

FOUR INDIANS DEAD IN BUILDING FIRE IN DUBAI

Duhai: Four Indians, including a couple from Kerala, were among 16 people dead after a massive fire broke out in a residential building in Dubai that also injured nine others, officials said on Sunday.

INDIA LOGS OVER 10K NEW CORONA INFECTIONS New Delhi: India added 10,093 new coronavirus infections while the active cases increased to 57,542, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Sunday.

Indian dies of bullet injuries in **Sudan violence**

PNS NEW DELHI

The armed clashes between the army and para-military in Sudan have claimed the life of an Indian working there. He was hit by a stray bullet and the Indian Embassy there was in touch with his family and the medical authorities to make further arrangements.

So far, 56 people including the Indian have died and more than 600 injured in violence.

"It has been reported that Albert Augestine, an Indian national working in a Dal Group Company in Sudan who got hit by a stray bullet yesterday succumbed to his injuries," a tweet from the Indian Embassy in Sudan on Sunday

The Embassy said they are in touch with Augestine's family and medical authorities to make further arrangements. Continued on Page 2

ASI issues draft notice seeking views on Shiva temple built at

over 12000 feet

Nestled in the picturesque snow-clad mountains at an altitude of over 12000 feet, historical Tungnath temple in Uttarakhand's Rudraprayag's district may soon get the tag of 'national importance" with the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) issuing a draft notification inviting suggestions and objections to its plans to bring

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

One of the most holy sites for Hindu pilgrims, the doors of the third Kedar Lord Tungnath will open for devotees on April 26. It is said to be

it under its ambit.

Tungnath temple may get nat'l importance tag the highest Shiva temple among the five "Panch Kedar" temples and is believed to have belonged to an ancient era and

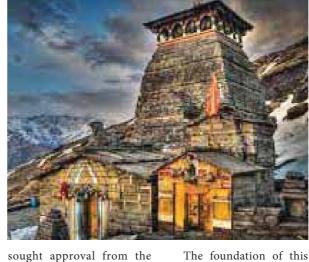
is almost 1000-years-old.

The ASI under the Union Culture Ministry had issued the draft notification last month. "Any objection or sugges-

tions, to the declaration of the said ancient monument to be of national importance, may be made within a period of two months from the date of issue of this notification, by any interested person in the said ancient monument, to the Director General

Archaeological Survey of India..." "The objections or suggestions, if any, received from any person with respect to the said draft notification within the period so specified shall be taken into consideraby the Central Government," says the notification signed by the ASI Director-General V Vidyavathi. The ASI's move followed after

the Dehradun circle of the ASI



Centre to declare it as a national monument and start work on the Pandava brothers its conservation. It is also It was built in the North referred to as "Tritiya Kedar", since it is part of the "Panch Kedar" cluster of Shiva temples spread across the Garhwal

temple was laid down by Arjuna who was the third of

Indian style of architecture and has a dozen shrines of other Gods surrounding the temple. Continued on Page 2

J&K completes land demarcation of Reasi lithium reserves sites

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The Union Territory admin-Listration in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has completed the demarcation work of the lithium reserves site spread in an area of around three square kilometre in the Salal-Haimna area of Reasi district.

On the other hand the revenue department has also completed the task of creating lists of habitations, plantations and other assets falling within these demarcated limits. According to official

sources, a total number of 326 houses have been identified besides other installations in the region. During the survey the revenue authorities have also demarcated 3,929 kanals of private land, 16,715 kanals of forest land and 269 kanals of UT's land in the region.

Amit Sharma, Secretary to Government, Mining Department, J&K, on Saturday visited the lithium reserves site in Reasi to take first hand account of the area and hold a review of the progress made on this behalf by the district administration. He said a process has been

initiated towards appointing a transaction advisor and auction platform to carry forward extraction process for this potentially rich reserves of lithium to the tune of 5.9 million tonnes, second highest in the world.

He said the UT administration led by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Secretary are looking forward to taking the next steps for Lithium extraction in Reasi at the earliest.

Continued on Page 2

BJP will form Govt in RSS conducts route Spiritual leader Narayan K'taka again: Shah

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said the BIP will form a government again in Karnataka, where Assembly elections are scheduled next month.

Addressing a public meeting in south Goa where he kicked off the Bharatiya Janata Party's campaign for 2024 Lok Sabha polls, Shah said the mood of people is in favour of BJP in Odisha and Telangana.

He referred to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's remarks on BJP's victory in "small states" of Goa and Uttarakhand earlier and said Kharge shouldn't insult small

Shah also said Congress was wiped out in recent polls in the Northeast after Rahul Gandhi campaigned for the party. He said the Congress considered Northeastern states as their stronghold due to a sizeable minority population in these states, but the outcome of



recent polls favoured BJP. "I saw the mood of people in favour of BJP in Odisha and Telangana. I want to tell Kharge ji and Rahul baba that the BJP will form a government in Karnataka again," he added.

Shah said when BJP won elections in small states like Goa, Uttarakhand, and in the Northeast, Kharge said these are small states. 'They are small states but

they are important states of the

country. Khargeji should not insult small states," Shah added. He said small states are important parts of the country and it is the policy of the Modi government to have a "bigger

responsibility towards small "Small states are the 'dharo-

he said mustard oil worth Rs

800 crore will be produced this

year alone in Kasĥmir. "Jammu

and Kashmir will move

towards self-sufficiency in the

production of the mustard oil".

of Jammu and Kashmir for GI-

tagging of the famous Basholi

painting, he said it is a signif-

icant landmark in preserving

and promoting the artistic and

cultural heritage of the Union

"Basohli Painting has become the first independent

GI-tagged product from

Jammu region. It will provide

access to customers to the

authentic product and a huge

boost to the local economy," he

said. The Lt Governor shared

the inspiring journey of self-

made women entrepreneurs,

Shalini Khokhar from Rajouri

Congratulating the people

as much important as big states. The smaller the state, the bigger the responsibility of the Centre to work for its development. This is the policy of the Modi government," Shah

Taking a dig at Rahul Gandhi, Shah said after 'Bharat Jodo Yatra', Rahul Gandhi undertook a full-fledged campaign in the Northeast elections, but the Congress party was wiped out from these states and people gave their mandate in favour of the BJP.

He said BJP has won a full majority in Tripura elections while 13 MLAs of the saffron party were elected in Nagaland. The government in Meghalaya was formed with the support of BJP," the home

Shah said the people of the Northeast have given a clear message that this country should be ruled by a party which can provide security, peace and development to the

Days after a Supreme Court green flag, the RSS on Sunday took out route marches at 45 locations across Tamil Nadu and the events passed off peacefully amid security, police

Union Minister of State L Murugan was among those who participated at the meets held in different parts of the state including Chennai, Madurai, Kancheepuram and Chengalpet.

Police security was posted at the routes where the RSS volunteers, dressed in their trademark white rolled up sleeves and khaki trousers, took out the march.

The route marches passed off peacefully, police said.On April 11, the Supreme Court upheld the Madras High Court orders allowing RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) to hold marches in the State and dismissed the appeals of the Tamil Nadu government.

Meanwhile, the RSS said



the route march is a part of its regular training.

Well-trained Swayamsevaks (volunteers) are members of the organisation. They range from daily wage earners, students to well-placed professionals, factory, office workers. Swayamsevaks working with their various other organisations also take part," the organisation said in a state-

"Sangh route march is a public exhibition of exemplary discipline by normal citizens and the organisation's training abilities. RSS conducts its route march to instil confidence amongst the general public that Hindu society can walk together in an organised, disciplined and punctual manner," it added.

marches across TN gets Mah Bhushan Áward

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday conferred the Maharashtra Bhushan Award to spiritual leader and social activist Dattatreya Narayan alias Appasaheb Dharmadhikari and said it was very rare to see the tradition of social service being passed from one generation to another.

Lakhs of followers of Dharmadhikari attended the grand function held on a sprawling 306-acre ground in Kharghar area of Raigad district. Flower petals were showered from a helicopter on the activist, dignitaries present on the dais and others who were part of the gathering. Dharmadhikari has a mas-

sive following in the state due to his tree plantation drives, blood donation and medical camps as well as de-addiction work in tribal areas.

The ground was packed with people and equipped

Union Home Minister Amit Shah presents Maharashtra Bhushan Award to

Dattatraya Narayan Dharmadhikari at a ceremony, in Kharghar on Sunday

with audio/video facilities for followers of Shree Sadasya (Dharmadhikari's organisation) to witness the function.

The Maharashtra Bhushan award was instituted when the Shiv Sena-Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) alliance came to power in 1995.

It was initially given to personalities in the fields of literature, sports and science, before being expanded to include those from social work, journalism, public administration and health services. Shah conferred the award to Dharmadhikari and presented him a shawl, a citation and memento and a cheque of ₹25 lakh, besides a

Dharmadhikari said the ₹25 lakh given to him will be donated to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund.

10-feet garland of roses.

Opp parties

demand

L-G: Admin steering change in socio-economic landscape of J&K with citizen's participation

Tammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha on Sunday shared inspiring stories of the change-makers and highlighted the efforts of his administration to realise the "true growth potential" of Jammu and Kashmir.

Speaking at his monthly "Awaam Ki Awaaz" radio programme, he said the Jammu and Kashmir administration with citizens' participation is steering the change in the socio-economic landscape of the Union Territory.

"Our collective effort is to create a more progressive, growth-oriented and aspirational society and lay a strong foundation for the journey of the next 25 years," the Lt Governor said.

Sinha said the Kashmir division is witnessing 'Yellow revolution' with oilseed crops registering a significant growth.

"There will be additional opportunities for oil extraction and value addition and therefore more entrepreneurial opportunities for people," the Lt

According to an estimate, Begum.

Indian dies of bullet injuries...

From Page 1

The 48-year-old hailed from Nellipara village in Kannur district, Kerala. He was working as a security manager with a firm in Sudan. He reportedly retired from the Army six years ago and went to Sudan last year.

Violence flared up in Sudan on Saturday after weeks of deepening tensions between military leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his number two, paramilitary commander Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, over the planned integration of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) into the regular army.In the backdrop of clashes between the army and the para-military in Sudan, Indians living there on Saturday were advised to remain indoors by the Indian Embassy.

"In view of reported firings and clashes, all Indians are advised to take utmost precautions, stay indoors and stop venturing outside with immediate effect. Please also stay calm and wait for updates," a tweet from the Indian Embassy in Khartoum read.

The caution was sounded following explosions and gunfire in the capital city as parabases. Explosions and gunfire rang out on the deserted streets of Khartoum, according to witnesses, after the paramilitaries said they were in control of the presidential place, Khartoum airport and other vital facilities.

The Central Committee of Sudan Doctors said on Sunday at least 56 civilians had died and over 595 had been injured in the clashes. Out of this, in the capital city of Khartoum, 25 people including 17 civilians have lost their lives. Both Sudan's military and paramilitary forces have blamed each other for escalating and initiating the violence.

The RSF has claimed that its forces have control over key areas in Khartoum, including the army chief's residence, the presidential palace and three airports.Attacks near many other important areas have been reported including army headquarters, the defence ministry and the state TV stations. While the SAF has refuted

the RSF's claim, the armed forces have also claimed that they have attacked RSF bases. While there is no electricity in many parts of Sudan and people have been encouraged to stay inside their houses amid heightened tensions, other countries have been affected by the ongoing crisis.

A Saudi passenger plane

was subjected to gunfire before it landed in Riyadh. "It has been confirmed that all members of the aircraft's cabin crew have safely arrived at the Saudi Embassy in Sudan," the airlines said in a statement. Countries worldwide have urged the two groups to call a ceasefire and de-escalate the tensions within the country.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for an end to the violence and tweeted, "I condemn the outbreak of fighting between the Rapid Support Forces & the Sudanese Armed Forces in Sudan. I'm engaging with the AU and leaders in the region & reaffirm the commitment of the @UN to support the people of Sudan in their efforts to restore a democratic transition." US Secretary of State

Antony Blinken, in a statement on Sunday, said, "Dangerous fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Security Forces... threatens the security and safety of Sudanese civilians and undermines efforts to restore Sudan's democratic transition."
He added, "The only way

forward is to return to negotiations that support the Sudanese people's democratic aspirations. We continue to remain in close touch with our Embassy in Khartoum and

3-member...

From Page 1

On March 28, the apex court had dismissed Ahmad's plea for protection and observed that the UP State machinery would take care of his protection in case of a threat to his life.

When Atiq's plea had come up for hearing before the top court, a Bench of Justices Ajay Rastogi and Bela M Trivedi granted him liberty to approach the Allahabad High Court for protection after he had claimed that his life was under threat while being in the custody of the UP Police. "It is not a case where this

court is going to interfere. Liberty granted to move appropriate application before the High Court. Whatever is the process prescribed under law will be followed," the Bench had said.

In his plea, Ahmad, who was earlier lodged at the Ahmedabad central jail in Gujarat pursuant to the apex court's direction, had referred to the statement made by Adityanath on the floor of the Assembly to "completely ruin and destroy" him.

Interestingly, as per an FIR registered at the Shahganj to having links with the InterServices Intelligence (ISI) and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).

Police said Ahmad's statement was recorded on court orders.

"The ISI, using drones, used to drop weapons in Punjab, and someone linked to the ÍSI used to collect these arms and send some of them to LeT, some to Khalistan separatist organisations, and some weapons like .45 bore pistol, AK-47 and RDX were made available to me, and I used to pay for the same.

"People belonging to these organisations also used to come to my place. And, information gathered from their conversations suggested that they wanted to cause a major incident in the country," Ahmad told police.

He also told police that he knew the whereabouts of some of these people associated with ISI and LeT, while his brother knew the details of others.

The five-time MLA also said that the weapons taken from (LeT and ISI) were used in the murder of Umesh Pal and two policemen in February this year. "I know the places where the weapons have been kept. These places do not have house numbers. If you (police) take me

extraction of this strategic min-

From Page 1 Former UP Chief Minister and Samajwadi Party chief

SC-monitored...

Akhilesh Yadav said a deliberate atmosphere of fear was being created among people, while BSP MP Danish Ali termed the shootings as "coldblooded" killings and said there was a "height of anarchy" in the "When someone can be

shot dead amidst a police cordon, then what about the safety of the general public," said Àkhilesh. Former Chief Minister of

Uttar Pradesh and Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati on Sunday said the killing raised serious questions over the style of functioning of the ÚP Government.

It would be better if the Supreme Court takes cognisance of this "extremely serious and worrisome" incident, which is being discussed across the country, she added.

In a series of tweets, she said, "Now, instead of 'rule of law by law' in Uttar Pradesh, how appropriate is it that it becomes 'encounter Pradesh'? Something to think about."

Chaudhary said every criminal has a right to be heard in court and be convicted there but Atiq Ahmad and his brother were killed in police custody in the

"The CM should answer what kind of law and order he has established in the State. Is this not jungle raj and a ground to call for emergency rule in

UP?", the RLD leader said. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, too, on Sunday expressed her shock at what she termed as collapse of

Tungnath temple may...

From Page 1

There are numerous tales associated with the place, including the one when Lord Ram carried out meditation to get himself released from the curse of Brahmahatya for killing Ravana. The distin-

guishing feature of this exquisite beauty is its location amidst beautiful mountain ranges and religious importance which has been attracting millions of Hindu pilgrims from around

According to one of the mythological legends associated with the history of Tungnath Temple, after the Mahabharata war, the Pandavas reached the Himalayas in search of Lord Shiva to repent for killing their

brothers and relatives. Lord Shiva did not want to appear to the Pandavas, so he took the form of a buffalo.

But the Pandavas recognized Lord Shiva, on which the Lord disappeared into the ground at Guptkashi, but the Pandavas did not give up the chase and the arms of Lord Shiva appeared in Tungnath in the form of a buffalo, since then the arms of the Lord are worshiped here.

J&K completes land demarcation of UT's...

From Page 1

Director Geology & Mining OP Bhagat, Joint Director Jammu HL Langeh, District Mineral Officer Reasi Shafiq Ahmed, Tehsildar, Naib Tehsildar, Sarpanches, Naib

Sarpanches and other prominent citizens of the area were present on the spot.

During his brief interaction with the local residents of the area the villagers requested visiting Secretary Mining to ensure that fair compensation is paid to the persons whose assets are coming within the zone of lithium reserves. In response Sharma assured that all care and due diligence shall be shown by the concerned

authorities, including Deputy Commissioner Reasi and her team for ensuring it.

Later, secretary Sharma led a brainstorming meeting along with DC Reasi Babila Rakwal and Director Geology & Mining with district officers of different departments to know about the progress made regarding assets identification so that this process goes-on parallel while Government is finalising RR plans towards

eral Lithium alongwith deciding towards setting-up metallurgy plants for bringing out the end finished product through SEZ for manufacturing plants in Reasi as an endto-end solution in this domain. It is expected that the discovery of Lithium in J&K can boost-up the UT economy exponentially as well as provide ample employment opportunities to the jobless local youth.

law and order in UP.

CBI grills Kejriwal for nine hrs in excise policy...

From Page 1

After investigation, one charge-sheet has been filed by CBI on November 25, 2022 against CEO of a Mumbai based firm and six other accused persons and further investigation is being carried out, it further said.

The Chief Minister of Delhi, was issued a notice under Section 160 Cr.P.C for his examination in this case on April 16 and answering various questions related to the case. He joined the investigation today and his statement has been recorded under Section 161 of Criminal Procedure Code (Cr.P.C), it said.

"The statement will be verified and collated with the available evidence. Further investigation of this case is continuing," the CBI added.

In a five-minute video message on Twitter before arriving at the heavily fortified

Bureau of Investigation at around 11 AM, Kejriwal claimed that the BJP might have ordered the agency to arrest him. However, his questioning

for the day ended around 8 PM,

officials said, adding, he is

likely to be summoned again as

per the requirements of the ongoing probe. After arriving at the agency headquarters, Kejriwal was taken to the first-floor office of the Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) of the CBI, which is probing the matter.

Senior officials of the agency remained ensconced at the agency headquarters here on Sunday to keep an eye on the development, a normal practice whenever a VIP is questioned at the state-of-theart building, they said.

The agency had summoned Kejriwal on Friday last

headquarters of the Central seeking his appearance as a witness before the investigation team to answer their queries on the inputs generated during the probe, the

The questioning revolved

around the policy formulation process regarding the controversial excise policy, especially the "untraceable" file, which was earlier slated to be put before the Council of Ministers, the sources said.

ions of the expert committee and public and legal opinions on it was not kept before the Council of Ministers and remains untraceable, the sources said.

The file containing opin-

They said Kejriwal was also quizzed on the statements of other accused, where they have indicated the manner in which policy was allegedly influenced to favour some liquor businessmen and the South liquor lobby, they said. During the questioning session, Kejriwal was offered a lunch break but he chose not to go outside the CBI office, ources said. Delhi Deputy Chief

Minister and AAP leader Manish Sisodia was arrested on February 26 after nearly eight hours of questioning in the case with the agency dubbing his answers as unsatisfactory. He quit as Deputy Chief Minister of Delhi on February

Kejriwal, who received solidarity messages from several Opposition leaders after being summoned by the agency, asserted that he would honestly answer questions posed by the CBI as he has nothing to

"I have been summoned by

the answers with honesty.

These people are very power-

ful. They can send anyone to jail, it does not matter if that person has committed any crime or not," Kejriwal said in his video message on Sunday before his questioning.\ "Since yesterday, all of their

leaders are screaming at top of their voices that Kejriwal will be arrested and I think BJP has instructed the CBI also that Kejriwal should be arrested. If BJP has given an order, then who is CBI? The CBI is going to arrest me," he said. Before reaching the CBI office, Kejriwal visited

Mahatma Gandhi's memorial at Raj Ghat this morning and was accompanied by his Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and some Cabinet colleagues to the agency's office.

Earlier, as Kejriwal's questhe CBI today and I will give all tioning got underway, top AAP leaders, including Mann, Saurabh Bharadwaj, Atishi,

Kailash Gahlot, Sandeep Pathak, Raghav Chadha and Sanjay Singh gathered near the CBI headquarters and raised slogans against the prime minister.

Several AAP leaders, including Punjab ministers and MLAs, alleged they were stopped from entering Delhi.

The ruling party in Punjab claimed that ministers Bram Shanker Jimpa, Balbir Singh and Harjot Singh Bains, and MLAs Dinesh Chadha and Kuljit Randhawa were among those stopped at the Singhu border.

The BJP accused Kejriwal of indulging in theatrics to divert attention from corruption and dared him to undergo a lie-detector test and said it was not the time for rhetoric but accountability.

BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra said on Sunday that investigation agencies such as CBI and ED work on the basis of facts, not emo-

While Kejriwal was being questioned, several senior AAP leaders were "detained" by the Delhi Police during a sit-in at Archbishop Road against his

summoning.
The detainees included Rajya Sabha MPs Sanjay Singh and Raghav Chadha, Delhi ministers Saurabh Bharadwaj, Atishi and Kailash Gahlot, AAP spokesperson Adil Ahmad Khan, AAP general secretary Pankaj Gupta and some ministers in the Punjab government.

Asked about the CBI action, BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra said the investigation agency wants to find out: "Who is the kingpin of the Delhi liquor scam? Did Manish Sisodia solely make this excise policy on his own, or someone else is also involved in

this?" Patra also posed some questions to Kejriwal at the conference Bhubaneswar.

'The Delhi liquor policy was passed by the cabinet on your instructions at your residence and time and again you have claimed this Delhi excise policy will bring huge benefits to the State's treasury, but instead a loss of Rs 3,000 crore was incurred and you had to withdraw the excise policy," he said.

Security was stepped up at the CBI headquarters with the Delhi Police putting in place four rings of barricading. Over 1,000 security personnel, including from paramilitary forces, were deployed outside the CBI headquarters and Section 144 of the CrPC had also been imposed in the area to ensure no gathering of more than four persons took place, they said.

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'BJP has instructed CBI to arrest me'

BJP has ego, power and they threaten everyone: Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A head of his appearance before the CBI, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday alleged that the BJP might have ordered the probe agency to arrest him, and said they are "very powerful and can send anyone to jail".

Kejriwal was questioned by the CBI on Sunday for nearly nine hours in connection with the excise policy scam case, officials said. The AAP chief, who arrived at the heavily fortified agency headquarters at around 11 am in his official black SUV, was taken to the first-floor office of the Anti Corruption Branch where he was quizzed by the investigation team, they said



Earlier in the day, in a fiveminute video message on Twitter, Kejriwal said he would truthfully and honestly answer questions posed by the CBI in the excise case as he has noth-

"I have been summoned by CBI today and I will give all the answers with honesty. These people are very powerful. They can send anyone to jail, it does not matter if that person has committed any crime or not,"

came on the day of Kejriwal's

questioning by the CBI, Maken

said, "I believe that individuals

like Kejriwal and his associates

who face serious corruption

charges should not be shown

"The allegations of LiquorGate and GheeGate

must be thoroughly investigat-

ed and those found guilty

political leaders, including

those from Congress, to recog-

nise that the money gained

through corrupt means by Kejriwal has been used against

the Congress party in several

states, including Punjab, Goa, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh,

Uttarakhand, and Delhi,"

"It is important for all

should be punished.

any sympathy or support."

the AAP leader said

"Since yesterday, all of their leaders are screaming at top of their voices that Kejriwal will be arrested and I think BJP has instructed CBI also that Kejriwal should be arrested. If BJP has given an order, then who is CBI? CBI is going to rrest me," he said.

In the video, the AAP leader charged that the BJP has the "ego" of power and they

"They keep threatening of Investigation (CBI) on everyone to obey us or else they February 26. Sisodia was last will send them to jail. These month arrested by the ED. It is alleged that the Delhi Kejriwal to jail, but what will happen with this," he asked.

government's excise policy for 2021-22 to grant licences to liquor traders favoured certain dealers who had allegedly paid bribes for it, a charge strongly refuted by the AAP. The policy was later scrapped.

Officials said the CBI may

also quiz Kejriwal on the state-ments of other accused where they have indicated the manner in which policy was allegedly influenced to favour some liquor businessmen and the South liquor lobby. In addition, the agency

may also seek his role in the formulation of the excise policy and his knowledge about alleged influence being cast by the traders and 'South lobby' members, the officials said. Kejriwal may also be asked

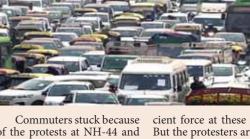
if he was involved in the formulation of the policy before it was given approval, they said.

Heavy traffic snarls in parts of city As AAP protests against CBI summons to Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

Heavy traffic snarls were witnessed on Sunday in several parts of Delhi following protests by AAP workers against the summoning of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal by the CBI in the excise policy Vehicular movement was

choked at the protest sites of Anand Vihar Terminal, ITO Chowk, Mukarba Chowk Peera Garhi Chowk, Lado Sarai Chowk, Crown Plaza Chowk, Dwarka More Sec 6 and Sec 2 Chauraha, Pecific Wala Chowk Subhash Nagar More, Prem Wari Chauraha Ring Road, New Delhi Railway Station Ajmeri Gate Side, Bara Hanuman Mandir, Karol Bagh Chowk, IIT Crossing, ISBT Kashmiri Gate, Raj Ghat and NH 24 near Murga Mandi Gazipur. Serpentine queues of vehicles clogged the roads owing to the protest.



of the protests at NH-44 and GT-Karnal Road tweeted pictures that showed long queues of vehicles. Moving at a snail's pace in bumper-to-bumper traffic, many commuters tagged the police in their social media posts and requested them to manage the situation.

Police officials, along with the traffic unit deployed at multiple locations, persuaded the protesters to move from the roads and allow vehiclular movement to flow.

"We have deployed suffi-

But the protesters are on a sitin, so we are persuading them to move because they are causing heavy traffic jams. If they are refusing to cooperate, we are removing them from the spot," a senior police official

The Delhi Police stepped up security outside the CBI headquarters as Kejriwal appeared before the agency for questioning in connection with alleged irregularities in the now-scrapped excise policy,

CM, his associates shouldn't be shown any support: Maken

Former Delhi Congress chief Ajay Maken on Sunday launched a scathing attack on AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal, saying individuals like him and his associates who face "serious corruption charges" should not be shown any sympathy or support any sympathy or support.

The stance by Maken, a

former Union minister during the UPA government, is at variance with his party's central leadership as Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge had telephoned Kejriwal on Saturday, a day after the AAP convenor was summoned by the CBI, and expressed solidarity with the AAP leader.

The statement comes at a time when efforts are being made to unite opposition parties and bring them together on a common platform.

In his call to Kejriwal, Kharge had stressed the need for opposition parties to unite against the BJP ahead of the 2024 general elections, accord-

ing to sources.
In a long Twitter post that

250 new vehicles to add to cop's mobility



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

t Governor VK Saxena on LSunday flagged off 250 Delhi Police vehicles that will add to the force's mobility amid ever-increasing operational requirements, officials said.

The newly procured vehicles, including 100 Maruti Suzuki Ertigas and 150 Mahinda Boleros, were flagged off from Baansera, a lush green asset created on the banks of the Yamuna near Sarai Kale Khan, they said. The Union Ministry of Home Affairs approved the procurement of 850 light motor vehicles as "fresh authorisation" for the Delhi Police to supplement its existing fleet, the officials said.

people are threatening to send

Talking about his journey, the Delhi chief minister said: "You

are saying that Kejriwal is cor-

rupt. Earlier I used to work in

income tax, I could have earned as much money as I wanted.I quit my job and worked in the

slums of Delhi for many years."
The AAP leader said if he

is corrupt then no man in the world is honest. "Kejriwal lives

for the country and will die for

the country, if you call me 100 times for the CBI and ED, I will

go 100 times," he said and

added, "I love the country and

Bharat Mata, can sacrifice my

moned as a witness and is not

an accused in the excise poli-

cy case in which his former

deputy Manish Sisodia was

arrested by the Central Bureau

Kejriwal is being sum-

life for the country".

According to the police, the fleet added on Sunday is the first tranche of the 850 vehicles that comprise 300 Ertigas, 200 Boleros, 100 Mahindra Scorpios and 250 Toyota Innovas. The remaining vehicles will be added

gradually. These vehicles, to be deployed strategically across the national capital, will ensure swifter mobility of the police besides improving the Delhi Police's visibility and enhancing the efficiency, the police said.

LG flags 'procedural lapses' in calling of 1-day Assembly's Session by CM

Delhi Lt Governor VK Saxena has raised red flags over "procedural lapses" in summoning of the State Assembly's one-day session on Monday amid AAP convener and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's questioning by the CBI in the alleged liquor scam

In a note to the Delhi government, Saxena has pointed out that the Speaker of the Delhi Legislative Assembly has proposed to call the second part of the 4th session of the 7th Assembly, whereas the Delhi Cabinet has recommended for convening a oneday session of the Assembly, officials at LG office said on

As per Rules and Act, the Assembly House, which was adjourned sine die on March 29, 2023, has to be first prorogued before a fresh session can be convened. As a session remains unprorogued, a new session cannot be convened, they said.



under what circumstances and under which provision of the GNCTD Act, 1991 the Second Part of the Fourth Session (Budget Session) of the Seventh Legislative Assembly has been convened instead of moving a proposal for Prorogation of the Budget Session and convening of the "One Day Session as per the Cabinet Decision." the LG said in his note.

This convening of Second Part of the Fourth Session (Budget Session) of the Seventh Legislative Assembly is not in accordance with the Cabinet

Decision dated and hence inconsistent with the statutory provisions envisaged under section 6 of the Government of NCT of Delhi Act, 1991, he said. "Therefore, the proposed Second Part of Fourth session on April 17 being summoned without following the due procedure, should not be convened," Saxena suggested.

The LG, in his note,

"advised" the government to direct the concerned department to submit an appropriate proposal to prorogue the Fourth Session (Budget Session) of the Seventh

Legislative Assembly with immediate effect, and for summoning "One-Day Session" in accordance with provisions of Section 6 of the GNCTD Act,

The LG also highlighted that there was no indication of any proposed legislative business to be transacted by the Assembly on April 17. This also needs to be reflected in the Cabinet

Decision as per Rule 15 (1) of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business of Legislative Assembly of NCT of Delhi Rules, 1997 to allow the members of the House to come prepared for fruitful deliberations," read his note.

Reacting to the LG's note, senior AAP leader and Cabinet minister in the Kejriwal government Saurabh Bhardwaj said, "Let me enlighten LG -Under Rule 17 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Delhi Assembly, Hon'ble Speaker has the power to call a sitting of the House "at any time after the House has been adjourned sine-die".

BJP stages dharna at Rajghat over AAP's 'insult' to Gandhi

group of Delhi BJP leaders Agroup of Form = , staged a sit-in at Rajghat here over alleged insult to Mahatma Gandhi by the AAP. The BJP leaders led by

state president Virendra Sachdeva also prayed at the Gandhi's memorial prior to AAP convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal reached there before going to the CBI headquarters for questioning in connection with the alleged liquor scam.
"When Kejriwal gets

trapped, he remembers Mahatma Gandhi, although he has ordered for removing Gandhi's portrait from offices of his government," Sachdeva charged.

He further attacked Kejriwal over AAP workers holding protests across the city, and said, "Kejriwal's politics is inspired by his actor friend



the movies. The call of AAP for road blockade in Delhi is inspired by the role of Raj in film Policegiri.'

Sachdeva said Kejriwal was called by the CBI for liquor scam of his government but he went to the Samadhi of Mahatma Gandhi, and nothing can be "more shameful" than

Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said that due to the hard work of BJP workers, Kejriwal who is "mastermind"

of the liquor policy scam will also be in jail soon.

Whenever Kejriwal was asked about the liquor scam in the assembly, he ran away. Kejriwal will now have to face the consequences of his actions and will have to resign and also go to jail," Bidhuri said.

Former Delhi BJP chief Adesh Gupta said the party workers' struggle has paid off today. Kejriwal's aides Satyendar Jain and Manish Sisodia are already in the jail waiting to welcome him there,

Heatwave at some places in Capital, rain to bring relief

Heatwave conditions pre-vailed at isolated places in Delhi on Sunday, and a fresh spell of rain will provide some relief starting Monday, the Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

Delhi's primary weather station, the Safdarjung Observatory, logged a maximum temperature of 40.4 degrees Celsius, three notches more than normal. The minimum temperature settled at 22 degrees Celsius, which is normal for this time of the year.

Several places in the national capital recorded a maximum temperature three to four degrees Celsius above normal. The automatic weather

station in Pitampura recorded a heatwave, with the maximum temperature (41.9 degrees Celsius) settling five notches above normal.



The threshold for a heatwave is met when the maximum temperature of a station reaches at least 40 degrees Celsius in the plains, at least 37 degrees Celsius in coastal areas. and at least 30 degrees Celsius in hilly regions, and the departure from normal is at least 4.5 degrees Celsius.

The Najafgarh and Sports Complex stations both recorded maximum temperatures of 42 degrees Celsius and 42.4 degrees Celsius, respectively.

The IMD said a western

disturbance active over the western Himalayan region is predicted to bring a fresh spell of rain in the plains starting Monday.

Earlier this month, the Met office predicted abovenormal maximum temperatures for most parts of the country from April to June, except parts of the northwest and the peninsular regions.

Above-normal heatwave days are expected in most parts of central, east, and northwest India during this period.

SDM, his staffer assaulted in Amar Vihar; case lodged

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Police on Saturday registered a case after the SDM of Karawal Nagar and his staff were allegedly assaulted when they had gone to inspect a jeans unit in northeast Delhi, officials said.

Sanjay Sondhi, Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM) of Karawal Nagar, filed a complaint with the police stating that around 1.45 pm, he along with staff members, visited a house in Amar Vihar to raid an illegal jeans colouring unit, they said.

The owner of the house, a Head Constable identified as Kuldeep Singh, along with some others, assaulted him and his staff and did not allow them to inspect the Kuldeep is posted in the

Security Unit of Delhi Police, a senior police officer said. The SDM and his staff were taken to GTB Hospital

for medical examination, he

Based on the complaint, a case was registered under sections 186 (obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions), 353 (assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty), 332 (voluntarily causing hurt to deter public servant from his duty), 342 (wrongful confinement) and 34 (common intention) of the Indian Penal Code and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 at Karawal Nagar police station, police said.

20-yr-old man stabbed to death in Capital

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

20-year-old man was Aallegedly stabbed to death in front of Loknayak Bhawan in Delhi's Tughlak Road area, police said on Sunday. Akash, who was standing

in front of the building, was stabbed by an unidentified person around 8 pm, a senior police officer said. He was stabbed on the

upper right side of the abdomen, he said.

A video purporting to show police personnel lifting the unconscious victim, who is bleeding profusely, is available

Deputy Commissioner of Police (New Delhi) Pranav Tayal said, "The motive is unclear though it looks like personal enmity. The man was



hospital where he was declared brought dead."

A case of murder has been registered and efforts are being made to nab the suspect, he

The police are also looking for CCTV cameras installed in the vicinity of the crime scene identify the suspect and establish the sequence of

Gang supplying guns to Punjab-based criminals busted

IANS NEW DELHI

he Special Cell of the Delhi ■ Police has said they have arrested three persons, including two arms suppliers and one receiver. The gang has supplied 300 guns to Punjab-based

criminals, police said.

Alok Kumar, Deputy
Commissioner of Police, Special Cell (Southern Range), said that the accused were identified as Rajinder alias Raju, Narender Singh alias Nitu alias Saphera and Pradeep

recovered from their posses-

sion. Recovered firearms were

meant to be supplied to the

criminals and arms traffickers

A senior police official said that 21 pistols and an Etios car used in carrying firearms were

in Delhi and Punjab. "Inspector Kanjeet Sing Satvinder, ACP Attar Singh received the tip-off about the gang members and a team was formed to nab them.

A specific information was

received that Rajinder and Pradeep had procured a consignment of pistols from Madhya Pradesh and they had brought them in Delhi in their Etios car. They were about to supply

it to one Punjab-based arms trafficker near Modi Mills Flyover. A trap was laid and they were held. Nitu was also held when he came to meet them," the police official added. Nitu was also previously

arrested in a case of highway

robbery and Arms Act in

Patiala, Punjab.

cause of death in one of the cases, it stated According to the bulletin,

> vious day. On Saturday, Delhi had recorded 1,396 COVID-19 cases with a positivity rate of 31.9 per cent -- the highest in

> > The capital saw a positivi-

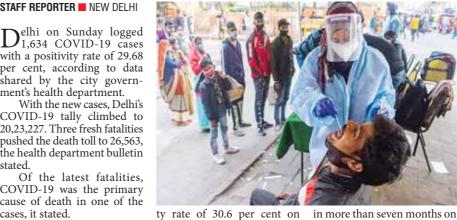
STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI Delhi on Sunday logged 1,634 COVID-19 cases with a positivity rate of 29.68

per cent, according to data shared by the city govern-ment's health department. With the new cases, Delhi's COVID-19 tally climbed to 20,23,227. Three fresh fatalities pushed the death toll to 26,563,

stated Of the latest fatalities, COVID-19 was the primary

the fresh cases emerged out of 5,505 tests conducted the pre-

The national capital's daily tally of COVID-19 cases crossed 1,000 for the first time



City sees 1,634 Covid cases, positivity 29.68%

ty rate of 30.6 per cent on January 14 last year.

The department did not issue a bulletin on Friday.

Delhi reported 1,527 COVID-19 cases with a positivity rate of 27.77 per cent on cases had dropped to zero on Thursday, and two deaths. January 16 for the first time

cases on August 18 last year.

since the outbreak of the pan-

demic. However, the city has

witnessed a spurt in cases over

Wednesday, while the positivity rate stood at 23.8 per cent. Delhi had recorded 1,964 The number of COVID-19 bulletin on Sunday said 270 of 7,951 beds in Delhi's dedicated COVID-19 hospitals are

occupied, while 3,393 patients are in home isolation. The number of active cases

The health department

currently stands at 5,297, it

Mock drills were conducted at Delhi hospitals on April 11 to ascertain their preparedness to tackle COVID-19. Medical experts have said

could be driving the surge in cases in the city.

However, they maintained that there is no need to panic and people should follow

Omicron sub-variant XBB.1.16

Covid-appropriate behaviour and get their booster shots. Delhi Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj had said last week that XBB.1.16 is not

leading to severe infection among children.

Modi hails 'Make in **India's' global strides**

 $P_{\text{Modi on Sunday expressed}}^{\text{rime Minister Narendra}}$ happiness over the strides made by the 'Make in India' initiative

His praise for the initiative came in response to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's tweet about taking a ride in a 'Made in India' train from Maputo to Machava with Mozambican Transport Minister Mateus Magala.

Tagging Jaishankar's tweet, Modi said, "This will make every Indian happy! Make in India continues to make glob-Modi has lauded six Road

Over Bridges (ROBs) that were inaugurated for Vidarbha region Saturday. Replying to a tweet by

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, the prime minister tweeted, "Great for connectivity in



Modi has praised SCO Millets Food Festival in Mumbai's Taj Mahal Palace.

The local MP Manoj Kotak had tweeted about the festival and Jalgaon's jowar, Nagpur's bajra, Aurangabad's ragi reaching Mumbai's Taj Mahal Palace in the form of SCO Millets Food Festival.

In reply the prime minister tweeted, "A laudatory effort to popularise Shree Ann in

Prime Minister Modi also

India stresses need to address climate change in tandem with green action G7 Ministers' meeting

Underlining that protecting and restoring ecosystems can help in reducing the extent of climate change and cope with its impacts, India on Sunday asserted that it is therefore important that we address issues related to climate change in tandem with environmental action, holistically Climate change, desertifi-

cation and biodiversity loss are deeply interlinked and pose existential challenges to humanity. In response to these challenges, Rio Conventions have made remarkable progress, through a consensus driven approach, based on principles, Minister Environment Bhupender Yadav said at the G7 Ministers' Meeting on Climate, Energy and Environment in Japan's Sapporo.Climate change, desertification and biodiversity loss



are deeply interlinked and pose existential challenges to humanity. In response to these challenges, Rio Conventions have made remarkable progress, through a consensus driven approach, based on principles, Union Minister for Environment Bhupender Yadav said at the G7 Ministers' Meeting on Climate, Energy and Environment in Japan's

Yadav reminded the gathering that recently at the CBD conference in Montreal we adopted the Global Biodiversity Framework and at CoP27 at Sharm el Sheikh, landmark decisions on issues like the taken. However, there still is a long way to go, he rued.

He said that India has been part of providing solutions, while it historically has not been part of any of the problems. He said India has rather taken strong domestic actions, set challenging ambitious targets for itself and is also steering international actions through various initiatives.

'India's approach has been focused on the convergence of the issues related to Climate Change, Biodiversity loss and pollution. This has reflected in taking up initiatives based on specific interventions through International Solar Alliance (ISA), Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), Lead IT," he added.

The Union Minister said India has also focused on action by all, including individual and community actions through

Fill vacancy in National Commission for Scheduled Castes expeditiously: SC

he Supreme Court has The Supreme count and directed the Centre to ensure that vacancy in the National Commission for Scheduled Castes is filled on an expeditious basis.

A bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices P S Narasimha and J B Pardiwala noted the submission of the Centre that there is one vacancy in the Commission. "The Union of India shall take appropriate steps to ensure that the composition of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes is completed on an expeditious basis," the bench

The top court was hearing a plea filed by Ambedkar Association for Development seeking to fill appointments to the post of Chairperson/Vice-Chairperson and Member of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes within a stip-



ulated period.

BJP leader and former

Union minister Vijay Sampla is the chairperson of the Commission.

The National Commission for Scheduled Castes is an Indian constitutional body established with a view to provide safeguards against the exploitation of Scheduled Castes and Anglo Indian communities to promote and protect their social, educational, economic and cultural interests. Cong will win at least 130 seats in K'taka; gateway to South for BJP will be closed: Veerappa Moily By Asim

Cong slams Govt over Antigua and Barbuda court's Choksi ruling

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW

The Congress on Sunday attacked the Centre after a court in Antigua and Barbuda reportedly ordered that fugitive diamantaire Mehul Choksi cannot be removed from the Caribbean country, alleging that this happened due to the government's "negligence".

The opposition party also alleged that "repeated negligence" shows that this is being done "intentionally".

According to media reports, a court in Antigua and Barbuda has ruled in favour of Choksi, wanted in a Rs 13,000-crore scam in the Punjab National Bank, ordering that he cannot be removed from that country.

Congress chief spokesperson Jairam Ramesh said, "Modi ji's 'Mehul Bhai' has been enjoying abroad for many years with the money looted from our banks. Earlier his red corner



notice was cancelled, now this decision of the court has come."

"All this has happened because of the negligence of the Modi government. It is clear from the repeated negligence that this is being done intentionally," Ramesh alleged.

The name of fugitive businessman Choksi was removed from the Interpol database of Red Notices on the basis of his plea to the Lyon-headquartered

Red Notice is the highest level of alert by the 195-member strong International Police cooperation organisation Interpol to locate and provisionally arrest a fugitive pending extradition, surrender, or

Sleep disturbances, dyspnoea and anxiety in long Covid, reveals study

Kashi Vishwanath and Bihu

Replying to a citizen who

got the opportunity to take his

prime minister tweeted, "love-

said, "Enjoyed watching RJ

Sufi highlight his Vande Bharat

shared artwork of famous

landmarks of Diu presented by

Padma Shri awardee Premjit

ather to Kashi Vishwanath, the

" In another tweet, the PM

The prime minister also

Celebrations.

ourney.

Those Covid-19 patients who had sleep disturbance during their hospitalisation might now be suffering with breathlessness — or dyspnoea - as well because of the infections' associations with reduced muscle function and anxiety, a study published in the Lancet Respiratory Medicine has said.

The study of patients in 38 institutions across the UK, led by University of Manchester and Leicester found that 62 per cent of Covid patients had sleep disruption, which was likely to persist for at least 12 months

"The study has discovered that sleep disturbance could be an important driver of post-Covid breathlessness — or dyspnoea — because of its associations with reduced muscle function and anxiety," said Dr John Blaikley, a clinical scientist from the University of Manchester and respiratory



The study has highlighted for the first time the association between two post-Covid condition symptoms: breathlessness and sleep disruption.

On average, participants who had been hospitalised with Covid-19 slept for over an hour longer, but their sleep patterns were less regular (19 per cent decrease on the sleep regularity scale), than matched participants who were hospitalised due to any cause.

The researchers also found that participants with sleep disturbance were more likely to have anxiety and muscle weakness, common post-Covid-19

condition symptoms.

The sleep disruption was likely to drive breathlessness directly, but that reduced muscle function and increased anxiety, both recognised causes of breathlessness, could partially mediate the association between sleep disturbance and breathlessness.

The authors speculate that targeting sleep disruption by reducing anxiety and improving muscle strength in these patients could alleviate breathlessness, but further investigation is needed.

Understanding the causes breathlessness is complex since it can arise from conditions that affect the respiratory, neurological, cardiovascular, and mental health systems.

"Our findings suggest that sleep disturbance is a common problem after hospitalisation for Covid-19 and is associated with breathlessness. We also show this is likely to persist for at least 12 months, a said first study author Callum Jackson from University of Manchester.

EAM Jaishankar congratulates newly-appointed Nepalese counterpart Saud

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday congratulated his newly appointed Nepalese counterpart Narayan Prasad Saud, hours after he took charge of the post.

Saud, a leader of Nepali Congress, was sworn in as the foreign minister, weeks ahead of a planned visit to India by Nepalese Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda. "Congratulate H.E. N.P.

Saud on his appointment as the Foreign Minister of Nepal. Look forward to working together to strengthen our multifaceted partnership. Best wishes for success in your new role," Jaishankar tweeted. In Kathmandu, Indian

envoy Naveen Srivastava paid a courtesy call on Saud and conveyed a message from Jaishankar.

"Naveen Srivastava, Ambassador of India paid a



courtesy call on Hon Foreign Minister Mr N P Saud @NPSaudnc today. Amb Srivastava conveyed message of congratulations from MEA of India H. E. @DrSJaishankar to the FM on his appointment as the Foreign Minister of Nepal," the Nepalese foreign ministry

Prime Minister Prachanda was holding the charge of the foreign ministry as his coalition partner Nepali Congress delayed its nomination to the

Under the power sharing understanding, Nepali Congress was to recommend a leader for the foreign minister's post. The Nepalese prime minister is set to visit India in the next couple of weeks.

NGT forms panel to take action against 'illegal' dyeing units

PTI NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal has formed a panel to verify the facts and take remedial action against several dyeing units, allegedly operating in violation of the rules, in Ghaziabad.

The green panel was hearing petition that claimed 19 dyeing units operating at Roop Nagar, Arya Nagar and Tronica City in Ghaziabad's Loni area were flouting environmental

A bench of Chairperson Justice AK Goel said, "Since it is stated that... the units are being allowed to operate against environmental norms, we consider it necessary to require a joint committee of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), state pollution control board (PCB) and (the) district magistrate, Ghaziabad, to verify facts and take remedial action.

"State PCB will be the nodal agency for coordination and compliance."

The joint committee will verify the compliance status of the operating industries, the status of the common effluent mode of effluent disposal, the panel said. It noted that the same issue was considered by its order in August 2019 and directed the panel to also ascertain the status of compliance with the earlier

be filed before this tribunal within two months...The state PCB may also put the concerned units to notice of these proceedings and furnish a copy of the report to such units...," the bench, also comprising Judicial Member Justice Sudhir Agarwal and Expert Member A Senthil

Vel, said. The matter has been posted for further proceedings on July 17. According to the petition, the authorities concerned did not take action against the dyeing units operating without consent and discharging untreated toxic effluents. Besides, the CETP in the area is

"An action taken report may

non-functional, it said.

K'taka polls: Former CM Shettar joins Cong after being denied ticket by BJP

DEEPAK UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

In a setback to the BJP for-mer Karnataka Chief Minister Jagadish Shettar resigned from the state assembly on Sunday and may contest against the BJP nominee on a Congress ticket. Shettar is the second big

BJP leader to quit the assembly and the party after deputy chief minister Laxman Savadi also resigned from the BJP and joined the Congress after being denied a ticket. According to sources,

Shettar, an important leader from the North of Karnataka, would cross-over to the Congress a day after. The six-time MLA was

hoping to run for the Hubballi-Dharwad central constituency but was denied ticket despite the party veter-



Capital and appealing to the top party leadership to consider his claim to contest his 'last assembly elections.'

BJP has gone for a 'generational change' in ticket allocation, bringing-in over 52 new faces for the May 10 assembly elections in Karnataka

Karnataka Chief Minster

Home Minister Amit Shah called Shettar on Saturday and tried to persuade him to stay back but Shettar did not

step-back. Shettar reached Sirsi in Uttara Kannada district and handed over his resignation letter to assembly speaker Vishveshwar Hegde Kageri, a BJP leader.

"I have decided to resign from the legislative assembly and the BJP. I have built and raised this party from scratch. But they (some party leaders) created a situation for me to resign from the party," he

Bommai and Union Ministers Pralhad Joshi and Dharmendra Pradhan also tried to convince Shettar to stay in the party, but he remained firm in his decision to contest the assembly elec-

India logs 10,093 Covid cases

NEW DELHI

Tndia on Sunday reported 10,093 cases in the past 24 hours, slightly lower than Saturday's numbers but for the past few days the caseload has been above 10,000 marks. On Saturday, 10,753 fresh cases were reported. This is the fourth consecutive day on which the country has clocked over 10,000 cases in the recent spike in infections over the past couple of weeks.

The daily positivity rate has been pegged at 6.78 while the weekly positivity rate stood at

At least 19 deaths were reported in the past 24 hours, including 4 reconciled deaths as per the ICMR guidelines and falling within 90 days following the date of death. Active cases went up by 3822 to 57542 while 6248 recovered in the



active cases, Kerala 19,481 and Maharashtra 6047.

While six deaths were recorded in Delhi and four in Maharashtra, three were reported from Rajasthan and one each in Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh.

The total tally of Covid cases is at 4.48 crore. The

rate has been recorded at 98.69, according to the ministry data.

Amid rising cases of coronavirus in West Bengal, the state Covid advisory board has stressed the need for stepping up genome sequencing surveillance to keep tabs on the sit-

"Covid is here to stay but that should not be a reason to panic. It is better to keep a proactive approach to tackle any situation. Genome sequencing and vaccination said a senior health official. The number of active cases

in the country stands at 57,542 and 19 deaths have been recorded in the past 24 hours. The daily positivity rate, an indicator of the spread of infection, is 5.61 per cent

The upward trend in Covid cases has prompted several states to hold review meetings to assess preparations for another surge in hospitalisa-

The government officials also said that the cases are likely to rise for the next 10-12 days and then subside. Even as several States have been moving towards making wearing of the mask mandatory, the officials asserted that there is no need to worry and cases will decline in the next few days.

However, those with comorbidities need to be alert and take adequate precautions, they

Basavaraj Bommai said Union tion. an air dashing to the National past 24 hours. Delhi had 4631 national Covid-19 recovery Digital platform to empower citizens for heritage conservation 'Lack of awareness about abortion among reasons PTI ■ NEW DELHI for spike in population' Seeking to prevent the demo-lition of heritage buildings

s India is on the brink of Asurpassing China to become the most populous country in the world, experts cite lack of literacy, awareness regarding contraception and abortions and economic factors among reasons for the spike in the population. According to data from the National Family Health Survey, more abortions take place in urban areas, which is 4 per cent, compared

to 2.5 per cent in rural areas. The data stated that 1.9 per cent women with no schooling background went for abortions while 3.5 per women with 10-11 years of education

The plans of making her daughter a doctor changed for Chaaya Devi after she had two more children. "Children are god's gift but

what if you don't have money to raise them and it leaves your other children suffering too," said the 25-year-old, a mother of three children. Devi, who is expecting her

fourth child, works as a domestic help in Noida. She now worries about how to ensure a good life for her children. "I consulted a government hospital doctor but she scolded me for getting pregnant again but she does not understand my consent is never taken," said Devi, who lives in a joint family with in the future and "empower" the owners of such properties, other citizens and young archi-

tects in working for their preservation, experts have developed a new digital plat-The Restoration Toolbox is a soon-to-be-launched, opensource participatory platform,

inspired by the concept of circular economy, and also allows people to "flag heritage buildings at risk" and "build a campaign" to save old structures if those are suffering decay or threat of demolition. Aishwarya Tipnis, a Delhi-

based conservation architect

with 20 years of experience,

rued that "many gaps exist in

the system when it comes to

conservation and restoration of

old buildings".

"One issue is that many heritage property owners, particularly private owners, are choosing to let go of their old buildings and offer them to builders for demolition and new projects if they don't find maintenance economically viable," she told PTI. Tipnis, who conceptualised

the project two years ago during the lockdown induced by the second wave of COVID-19, said the pandemic "forced us to imagine architectural practice in a virtual space and the result was this digital toolkit".

past two years as multiple partners joined over time.

Platoniq. The pilot was funded by

Goethe Institut, Be Fantastic and ZKM Karlsruhe, the architect said. It has been selected among

of Culture - 2023. The project

The project evolved in the

The pilot of The Restoration Toolbox has been developed by Jugaadopolis (Aishwarya Tipnis Architects) with technical support from

the eight innovative projects for international cultural relations as part of the European Spaces

is being formally launched on April 19 at the Alliance Francaise de Delhi, she said.

When we analysed the gap, we realised that if heritage property owners are often hesitant to pay a conservation architect, if he or she has to visit from a different city just for consultancy, and we realised they could rather put that money in restoring the structure with right guidance, which the platform provides," she told PTI.

Tipnis holds a bachelor's degree in architecture and PhD from the School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi, besides a master's degree from the University of Dundee, Scotland. She has worked on conservation projects in Delhi, Chinsurah and Chandannagar in West Bengal, and has been an advocate for preservation of built heritage.

want to offer this toolbox digitally to such owners, and offer guidance of experts who have signed up on our platform, all free of cost.

Those who wish to further engage with architects or hire them can do so after connecting online via our platform. "The idea is to reach out to

as many people as possible, and try to plug the gaps that we found in the practice," she said. The platform aims to

"empower citizens" to restore their own buildings in the hope to "democratise the process of heritage conservation", improve accessibility to right expert advice and provide a space for collaboration for citizens and policymakers to better lives and neighbourhoods while choosing preservation and not demolition as a way forward, the architect said.

buildings in most Indian cities is dismal, plagued by issues of structural degradation, a host of economic and legal issues. Cities are rapidly degrading, old buildings are being replaced with nondescript buildings (that are) not only changing the urban landscape of the city but also severely impacting pollution levels, harming local com-munities and the planet," reads the project website. Research has proven that

restoration and adaptive reuse of existing buildings contributes to achieving the circular economy. However, in the Indian context, lack of access to information, experience and technical skills makes the decision to retain and retrofit an old building confusing and appear unviable. The Restoration Toolbox "aims to change this status quo," it says.

BIHAR HOOCH TRAGEDY —

80 arrested, 11 police personnel suspended

PTI ■ MOTIHARI/PATNA

Police have arrested 80 people from East Champaran district of dry Bihar for allegedly being involved in spurious liquor trade, following a suspected hooch tragedy that claimed 14 lives so far in Motihari, officials said on

The district administration suspended 11 police personnel, including a sub-inspector and an assistant sub-inspector, who were posted as in-charge of anti-liquor task force (ALTF) at Areraj and Sadar sub-divisions of Motihari respectively, on the charge of dereliction of duties, according to an official statement.

Nine 'chowkidars' posted at different villages of Motihari were among the suspended policemen, it said.

Disciplinary actions have been taken against these police personnel for alleged dereliction of duties, a senior official of the district police said.

Police also seized huge quantities of spurious liquor during searches after the suspected hooch tragedy in East Champaran.

Twenty people, "involved in the illegal trade of liquor" have been arrested in Turkauliya, Harsiddhi, Sugauli and Paharpur of Motihari, where



was reported on Saturday, according to the statement issued by the East Champaran district police.

Sixty more people were also apprehended for being "involved in the illegal trade of liquor in the district", it said.

The district police have also seized huge quantities of spurious liquor and other related chemicals following searches at more than 600 places in different parts of Motihari in the last 24 hours.

"Police recovered 370 litres of country-made liquor, 50 litres of spirit and 1,150 litres of other chemicals used in the manufacturing of spurious liquor," the statement said.

The death count in the latest tragedy may increase further as the condition of five persons is reportedly to be critical, a senior police officer said.

The police were informed on Saturday that some villagers died after allegedly consuming spurious liquor in different areas of the district.

Police teams were immediately sent to several hospitals in the city, the statement said. Reacting to the suspected

hooch tragedy, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar had on Saturday said: "I have been maintaining that liquor is bad and shouldn't be consumed. I have asked officials to take strict action against those who violate prohibition laws".

The state government imposed a total ban on sale and consumption of alcohol on April 5, 2016.

Scores of people had died in the last major hooch tragedy in Saran district in December

Pawar told Uddhav NCP will never join hands with BJP: Raut

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut on Sunday claimed NCP chief Sharad Pawar recently told Uddhav Thackeray that his party will never join hands with the BJP even if anyone takes an individual decision to do so.

Raut made the comments in his weekly column 'Rokhthok' in the party mouthpiece Saamana in the wake of speculations that senior NCP leader Ajit Pawar may break ranks to join hands with the ruling BJP in the state, amid a plea seeking disqualification of 16 MLAs of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena pending before the Supreme

However, Ajit Pawar, who is the leader of opposition in the state Assembly, dubbed such speculations as baseless and denied meeting Union Home Minister and senior BJP leader Amit Shah in Mumbai on Saturday night.

The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), Thackeray's Shiv Sena (UBT) and the Congress are constituents of the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) in the state.

Raut in the Marathi publication claimed, "(Sharad) Pawar told Uddhav Thackeray during their meeting (on Tuesday) that nobody wants to switch over. But, family is being targeted. If anyone takes a per-



sonal decision to leave, it is their individual issue. But we as a party will never go with the BJP."

"There is tremendous anger among people of Maharashtra against the present state government. Any one joining the BJP will be committing political suicide. This is want Thackeray and Pawar felt," the Rajya Sabha member wrote.

He further claimed that Sharad Pawar during the meeting with former chief minister Thackeray said he would like to tell those who want to switch over that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) "files" will go in a cupboard from the table, but will never be closed.

There are speculations in political circles about what would be the future move of Ajit Pawar and the senior NCP leader should himself clarify. Raut said. He said a sugar mill belonging to Ajit Pawar's family was raided and seized by the ED. But, now the chargesheet doesn't have any mention of Ajit Pawar or his family mem-

BJP on tenterhooks in poll-bound K'taka as ticket distribution sparks rebellion

PTI ■ BENGALURU

The banner of revolt by disappointed ticket aspirants in a number of constituencies seems to be keeping the BJP leadership on tenterhooks, as it resorts to douse the fire with less than a month to go before the Assembly polls.

The Bharatiya Janata Party cannot rule Maharashtra

on its strength and has to ally

with Shiv Sena led by Chief

Minister Eknath Shinde, Sena

MP Gajanan Kirtikar said here

Sena were divided due to the

split in the party last year but voters can be won over again.

Maharashtra on its strength

and will not be able to do so. It

has to ally with Shiv Sena as the

ruling coalition (BJP and Shiv

Sena led by Shinde) has a

committed vote bank," he told

reporters after attending a party

He also said votes of Shiv

The BJP could not rule

on Sunday.

The decision of former Chief Minister Jagadish Shettar and former deputy Chief Minister Laxman Savadi to quit the BJP after the party decided not to field them in the May 10 elections, has given a jolt to the party.

Party leaders in private acknowledged that the disgruntlement after announcement of candidates is certainly a cause for worry. The BJP has so far

announced candidates in 212 constituencies out of the total 224 in two lists.

According to party sources, there seems to be revolt in about two dozen Assembly segments. Karnataka BJP strongman

BJP cannot rule Maha on its strength,

had to ally with Shiv Sena: MP Kirtikar

The MP from Mumbai

"Nationalist Congress

also claimed that no single

party could rule Maharashtra

on its strength, be it BJP, Shiv

Party chief Sharad Pawar had

tried to capture power on his

Sena, or NCP.

B S Yediyurappa on Sunday said no force can stop the party from coming back power with a clear majority.

The national party has pressed its leaders into action for damage control. Union Ministers Dharmendra Pradhan (poll in-charge), Pralhad Joshi, Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai Yediyurappa, state president Nalin Kumar Kateel are engaged in trouble-shooting exercises.

Also, some RSS leaders are said to have been roped in to pacify the dissidents.

Bommai and Yediyurappa have said that they are talking to all the disgruntled leaders personally to ensure that they don't leave the party, and the central leadership is personally in touch with some seniors who are upset.

own strength but he couldn't succeed," he said.

The Parliamentary Party leader also mocked Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut, saying he has become a source of entertain-

ment for the people.

The Shiv Sena split last year after Shinde rebelled against the party leadership, leading to party leadership, leading to the collapse of the MVA gov-ernment led by Uddhav Thackeray. Shinde joined hands with BJP to become the chief minister.

The Election Commission later recognised the faction led by Shinde as the real Shiv Sena and allotted it the "bow and arrow" poll symbol.

Court acquits Nepalese man accused of beheading colleague

PTI THANE

Acourt in Maharashtra's Thane district has acquitted a 38-year-old Nepalese national accused of beheading his colleague and disposing off his remains at different places.
Additional sessions judge at
Kalyan Shaukat S Gorwade

acquitted Rajeshkumar Nepali aka Yagnaprasad Kaluram Pukhrel (Jaisi) of charges under sections 302 (murder) and 201 (causing disappearance of evidence) of the Indian Penal Code. The judge in his order dated April 10 noted that the prosecution had failed to prove all the charges against the

According to the prosecution, the alleged accused worked at a Chinese eatery at Katrap on Badlapur-Karjat

Rahul dares PM to make 2011 caste census data public

PTI ■ KOLAR (K'TAKA)

ongress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday dared Prime Minister Narendra Modi to release the 2011 caste-based census data in the public domain and also demanded the 50 per cent cap on reservation be removed.

The Congress leader claimed there are only 7 per cent other backward castes, Dalits and tribals as secretaries in the central govern-

This is Gandhi's first rally in Karnataka since he was disqualified from Parliament after being convicted in a defamation case last month.

regime had compiled the Socio states crossing the figure.



Economic and Caste Census (SECC) in 2011. The reports from the census have been published except that of the caste data.

The 50 per cent ceiling refers to Supreme Court judgments pointing out that the overall reservation in government jobs and education for various communities should not breach the mark although

Graft allegations: DMK hits back at BJP's Annamalai with ₹500 crore legal notice

PTI CHENNAI

the ruling DMK in Tamil The runing Divis in American Nadu has slapped a legal notice on State BJP chief K Annamalai over his graft allegations against the party, its President and Chief Minister M K Stalin, demanding an apology and damages to the tune of ₹500 crore.

The 10-page notice issued by DMK Organisation Secretary R S Bharathi said Annamalai's allegations named 'DMK Files' and targeted at Stalin and other party leaders were "false, baseless, defamatory, imaginary and scandalous." The notice dated April 15 was issued by senior advocate and DMK Rajya Sabha MP, P Wilson, "under instructions'



"₹200 crore" graft charge against Stalin, the notice said "the DMK President has not received a single paise as illegal gratification from any person throughout his 56 years of public life."

Besides demanding an unconditional, public apology from Annamalai on behalf of Stalin, Bharathi wanted "offending" videos containing the allegations removed from the social media and a website.

It also called upon the BJP

five hundred crore only) to our client (Bharathi), which our client intends to pay over to the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's relief fund." These should be done with-

in 48 hours of "receipt of this notice, failing which our client will be constrained to initiate appropriate civil and criminal proceedings against you and your properties, holding you personally liable for all costs and consequences arising therefrom,"

Bharthi told Annamalai that as he and his party were unable to make a mark electorally in Tamil Nadu, "you have been making constant attempts to defame, scandalise and tarnish the reputation of the DMK Referring to Annamalai's tune of ₹500,00,00,000 (Rupees members of the DMK party."

Raj Police performed duty with impartiality, says Gehlot

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Sunday said the police's "will not bow down" approach over the last month had led to a 10 per cent reduction in crime.

Gehlot made the remark after inspecting the parade on Day at Rajasthan Police and the public. I have seen this chief minister added.

"I have seen that due to the police operation being carried out for the last one-and-a-half months, goons and historysheeters are now talking about non-violence.

'Those who used to start their day with crime earlier are roaming around with folded

in the media," Gehlot said. He also fired a warning at the mafia and

gangsters.
"I want to warn the mafia gangsters who are still out of jail today that either they surrender themselves to the police as soon as possible or else their condition will be the same as is

How Atiq's key vote in 2008 helped save UPA Govt, India's nuke deal with US

Six criminal-politicians, including Atiq Ahmad who was shot dead Saturday, were furloughed from different jails in just 48 hours with little fanfare in 2008, with a book on "Baahubalis" claiming their votes were crucial to save the embattled UPA government and India's civil nuclear deal with the US.

The Opposition had brought a no-confidence motion against the Manmohan Singh dispensation and at stake was his United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government and the nuclear deal. Among these six legisla-

tors, who collectively had over 100 criminal cases against their names, was the then Samajwadi Party's Lok Sabha MP Atiq Ahmad, who represented Allahabad's (now Prayagraj) Phulpur constituency. The book — "Baahubalis of

Indian Politics: From Bullet to Ballot" — authored by Rajesh



Singh and published by Rupa Publications mentions how the gangster-politician had the distinction of being one of the musclemen who saved the UPA government from a collapse.

The Left parties had withdrawn their outside support to the regime in mid-2008 over the government's decision to proceed with a civil nuclear

"The UPA had 228 members in the Lok Sabha and was short of 44 seats for a simple majority to overcome the crisis of confidence. Prime Minister Singh, however, expressed confidence that he would survive. It soon became evident as to where that confidence came from," Singh

Brief history of killers: From everyday crime to making 'name for ourselves'

Abrothers are now priests, a child who ran from home. This is how two of the three men who killed gangsterpolitician Atiq Ahmad and his brother Ashraf are remembered by their neighbours and families.

The young men told police they carried out the audacious attack Saturday, while the brothers were being escorted by police for a medical checkup, because they wanted to make a name for themselves in the world of crime.

The alleged assailants, Lavlesh Tiwari (22) of Banda, Mohit alias Sunny (23) of Hamirpur and Arun Maurya (18) of Kasganj, were arrested by policemen accompanying the Ahmad brothers.

Tiwari was injured in the "drug addict" whose cross-fire, which also hurt a policeman. The assailants posed a TV crew and fired at almost point-blank range.

A Banda resident, who did not want to be named, told media persons that Tiwari's family was unlike the rogue son, whom he also described as a "drug addict".

"His family has been our neighbour. The family is simple. Two of his brothers are priests while one is still studying. Lavlesh has been into crime and has been to jail several times. He has also gone to jail in an eve-teasing case earlier," he said.

"He had ambitions to earn a big name in the world of crime," the neighbour

6 named in Umesh Pal murder case killed so far

With gangster-politician Atiq Ahmad and his brother Ashraf shot dead by assailants in Prayagraj on Saturday, three of the family's four members named in the Umesh Pal murder case have been killed.

Ten people were named in the FIR registered at the Dhoomanganj police station of Prayagraj on February 25, a day after Umesh Pal was killed. Ahmad's son Asad was also named as a shooter, along with six others.

Apart from Ahmad and Ashraf, four others named in the FIR — Asad, Arbaaz, Vijay Chaudhary alias Usman and Ghulam – have also been killed. Ahmad's wife Shaista Parveen and three other alleged

shooters are absconding. Umesh Pal was a key wit-

ness in the 2005 MLA Raju Pal murder case, in which Ahmad was also an accused.

Of the seven people seen in the CCTV footage that captured the killing of Umesh Pal, Arbaaz, who allegedly drove a sports utility vehicle (SUV) carrying the attackers, was killed in an encounter on February 27

Shooter Vijay Chaudhary alias Usman was killed in an encounter in Prayagraj on March 6. Asad and Ghulam were killed in another encounter with the Uttar Pradesh Special Task Force in Jhansi on April 13.

The three remaining shooters — Guddu Muslim, Sabir and Armaan — are absconding. Parveen is also on the run.

Atiq, brother Ashraf buried in Prayagraj

PTI ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Gangster-politician Atiq Ahmad and his brother Khalid Azeem alias Ashraf were buried in their ancestral village in this Uttar Pradesh district amid tight security on Sunday.

The bodies of the brothers which were handed over to the family members after conducting the post-mortem examination, were brought to the Kasari Masari graveyard here for performing the last rites at about 6.30 pm and it took about two hours to conclude the rituals.

The bodies of former Samajwadi Party (SP) MP) Ahmad and Ashraf, who were gunned down by three assailants posing as journalists in Prayagraj on Saturday night, were taken to the graveyard in ambulances.

Taken aback by total collapse



allowed to be present on the occasion were noted in a register and they were permitted entry only after their identity was verified. Ahmad's wife Shaista Praveen, an absconding accused in the Umesh Pal murder case,

did not turn up for her husband's burial. Senior officials of the administration and police were present at the graveyard.

SCHOOL RECRUITMENT SCAM

CBI raids another TMC MLA Saha amid a dramatic incident of the

SAUGAR SENGUPTA KOLKATA

fter senior State Minister

APartha Chatterjee, Manik Bhattacharva now it is the turn another Trinamool Congress MLA Jiwan Krishna Saha whose house has been raided by the officials of the Central Bureau of Investigation in connection to the school level recruitment scam.

Saha's house at Baroan in Murshidabad district was being raided for the past 48 hours and



ent house arrest, sources close to his family said. The raid which started

TMC MLA lobbing two of his mobile phones and a pendrive straight into the pond just behind the high wall of his vil-lage house. While the CBI sleuths managed to recover one mobile set after about 36 hours of search operation that included the pumping out of the water of the pond these cond phone was still being looked for and was feared to beenstuck in the

heatwave batters Bengal PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Schools, colleges shut as

The West Bengal Government has ordered the shutting down of all the educational institutions in the State for one week in view of the prevailing heat-wave like conditions. All the schools and col-

leges, including the private

institutions would be shut for

one week from Monday, a gov-

ernment notification said fol-

lowing a decision taken by

Banerjee who on Monday said, "the Government has urged all schools, colleges and educational institutions and universities including private institutes to announce holiday for this week due to the heat wave. The Chief Minister said

Chief Minister Mamata

how children had been complaining of headaches and other ailments due to the hot spell for the past more than two weeks urging people to remain indoors throughout the day.

of law & order in UP: Mamata SAUGAR SENGUPTA KOLKATA

angster politician Atiq Ahmad and his brother's custodial murder was one shameful model of the law and order in Uttar Pradesh under Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, his Bengal counterpart Mamata Banerjee on

Sunday said. Banerjee who has of late been under intense attack from the Opposition BJP for running a corrupt and criminalised government — that has seen a



jail on corruption charges apparently lapped up the UP issue reiterating how she was shocked at the brazen anarchy and total collapse of the law and

"I am shocked by the brazen anarchy and total collapse of law and order in Uttar Pradesh. It is shameful that perpetrators are now taking the

order in the north Indian state.



law in their own hands, unfazed by the police and media presence. Such unlawful acts have no place in our constitutional democracy," Banerjee wrote on Twitter even as her party spokesperson Kunal Ghosh went steps ahead calling the incident "dangerous www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

-PAPER WITH PASSION-

Ambitious but doable

\$900-billion exports target is achievable but this can happen only when there is a boom in manufacturing

he Government is reportedly contemplating an ambitious export target of \$900 billion for the current fiscal, which will be almost 17 per cent more than exports of \$770 billion in 2022-23. Optimism in official circles is occasioned by various factors, one of which is the World Trade Organisation's (WTO's) upwardly revised forecast for trade growth. It estimates that global merchandise trade volume growth will be 1.7 per cent of world GDP in the calendar year 2023; in October 2022, its estimate was 1 per cent. Second, the \$94-billion increase in exports in 2022-23 despite huge problems has made the officials upbeat. Third, they are confident that the Make in India, Make for World programme and the Rs-2 lakh crore production linked incentive (PLI) schemes to incentivise exports are doing well, especially in electronic exports. Electronics



figured in the top 10 items of merchandise exports; it was 5.7 per cent in its share in 2022-23 at \$25.39 billion, up from 3.71 per cent in 2021-22. US technology giant Apple has augmented its iPhone production in India substantially; it rose from 1 per cent of global production to 7 per cent in two years. Apple partners like Foxconn Technology Group and Pegatron Corp are assembling their products in India. Chinese smartphone maker Vivo will also invest Rs 1,100 crore in a new 169-acre manufacturing facility in Greater Noida. The Government believes that the \$900-billion exports target is not unrealistic but it will fix the target after wide consultations with all stakeholders.

Policy and decision makers, however, would do

well to focus more on merchandise exports. In the last fiscal, these were \$447.46 billion, up from \$422 billion in 2021-22; this was a rise of merely 6 per cent. Services exports, on the other hand, grew from \$254.53 billion in 2021-22 to \$322.72 billion in 2022-23, registering a rise of 26.8 per cent. In other words, most of the rise in exports is because of the excellent performance of services. This is a familiar story, a story that underlines the Indian economy's Achilles' heel-manufacturing. National Manufacturing Policy, which was announced in 2011, aimed to increase the share of manufacturing in GDP to 25 per cent by 2025. In 2021, it was 14 per cent, down from 15 per cent in 2015. In fact, since 1960 this share never touched even the 20 per cent mark. If the Government really wants to increase merchandise exports, it has to ensure buoyancy in manufacturing. It is doing a lot directly and indirectly to boost factory output. At the Central level, there are not many procedural rigours, but the same cannot be said about the State level; it is here that industrialists, especially from micro, small and medium enterprises or MSMEs, face problems. The Centre must coax, nudge or goad States to become more sensitive to the concerns of MSMEs—and not just in hitech sectors like electronics. There cannot be a boom in merchandise exports without a boom in manufacturing.



Passengers of Bharat Gaurav tourist train visit Dragon Palace Buddhist temple in Nagpur

Time to reconcile Kashmiri Pandits

Kashmiri Pandits have suffered for many years. To move forward concrete steps must be taken by the government writes Rahul Pandit

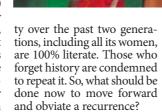
y daughters were enjoying meditative serenity in the gardens of the . Hazratbal mosque at Srinagar with birds in the azure skies above and the green waters of the Dal Lake caressing it below. They had finished offering prayers at the shrine on their first trip to the valley in 2016. 'What happened was wrong. I pray every day for Pandits to return" Sh. Ghulam Hassan Banday, the pious and fatherly Custodian of the Holy Relic of Prophet Muhammad, was speaking to my in-laws, tears welling up in his eyes. I felt his sincerity, I was

This reverie was broken with the memories of the pogrom and the forced exodus of 400,000 Kashmiri Pandits from the valley in the 90s. Author of 24 books, freedom fighter and poet Pandit Sarwanand Koul Premi and his son Pandit Virendra Koul were abducted from their house in village Soaf Shali, Anantnag. Their bodies were found hanging from a tree a day later.

This mayhem continued for over a decade to accelerate the pace of ethnic cleansing. Panun Kashmir, an organization of displaced Kashmiris, has published a list of 1,341 murdered Kashmiri Pandits. Widely read newspapers Aftab and Alsafa carried advertisements asking Hindus to leave or risk being eliminated.

The Indian state's pusillanimity left the Kashmiri Pandits to fend for themselves. While mass hysteria engulfed the valley, many families were also saved and clandestinely helped escape by their Muslim neighbours. The government of India records 64,951 displaced Kashmiri families. In 1995, the National Human Rights Commission headed by the former Chief Justice of India M.N. Venkatachaliah held the systemic ethnic cleansing of Kashmiri Pandits akin to geno-

Steeped in Shaivism that exhorts compassion and forgiveness, Pandits did not let the venom of hatred grow deep inside or plot violent retribution. They resolved instead to a code of morality and pursuit of education. That is why the entire communi-



Acceptance and apology: Acceptance is half the walk to closure. It is important to prevent the assassination of India's memory by denying or minimizing this savagery of slaugh-

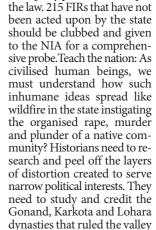
The Parliament must record an apology for India's failure in preventing the genocide of Kasĥmiri Pandits. This will help douse the embers that burn the hearts of mothers who lost their children to this

Punish the guilty: The Supreme Court of India in 2019 rejected a PIL for the prosecution of the accused on the ground that the time gap will make it difficult to collect evidence. Most Kashmiris say that if the SC after 36 years in 2020 can decide on conviction for the 1984 anti-Sikh riots it should do so too for this genocide in the 90s.

A Judicial Commission under a retired Chief Justice of the Supreme Court should be immediately constituted, akin to the Justice G.T. Nanavati Commission, formed in 2000 to probe the 1984 riots. Those found guilty should be given

POOR HEALTH OF RURAL HEALTHCARE

Sir — Strong primary health care ...: Apr



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I LOVE MY

exemplary punishment as per

KASHMIRI PANDITS

Reparation & resettlement: ENGULFED THE The return of the exiled Pandits with pride, is a matter VALLEY, MANY of enforcing India's Constitu-tion in Kashmir, both nation-ally and in the global arena. **FAMILIES WERE** ALSO SAVED AND The government must pay reparation for the families forced to flee their homes. Resettlement cannot just HELPED ESCAPE

for over 1,000 years.

WHILE MASS

CLANDESTINELY

BY THEIR MUSLIM

NEIGHBOURS

HYSTERIA

be an exercise in restoring the physical status quo pre-1990 but an enabling approach for political empowerment. A State Minority Commission, led by a retired Supreme Court Justice must be constituted. Its ambit snould include compiling a comprehensive list of the usurped lands, orchards and properties of the Kashmiri Pandits, and laying down the

process to restore the same. Economic revitalization: These initiatives will succeed only if backed by an economic agenda that creates jobs for the valley's youth and prosperity for all its citizens. Four key sectors to drive this agenda could be Sustainable Tourism

- Holistic Healthcare
- Geographical Indication
- Education.

India has the opportunity to make Kashmir the sustainable Tourism Capital of the World – flanked by the Zabarwan mountains and caressed by its gardens, lakes, rivers, vallevs and wildlife with opportunities for golf, skiing, paragliding, river rafting, trekking, mountain climbing, camping and rural tourism.

An empowered Kashmir Economic Resurgence Council led by the Niti Aayog Chairperson should supervise a roadmap for accelerated implementation of this agenda. The acceptance of a shared culture and admittance of the integrity of the other's experience will initiate the process of healing helping wash the dirty blood stains of the genocide off India's fabric. Lord Rama was exiled for 14 years, and Kashmiri Pandits nave now been in exile for over 30 years. It is time for India to get them home.

(The views expressed in the writeup are writer's own)

Congress must revamp its state units



PTI

Congress is vital for the political fabric of the country but must strengthen its state-level units to remain relevant

The last few days saw a series of political earthquakes of low magnitude causing some shock waves in the national capital as well as in Kerala. It all began with the release of the life story of Ghulam Nabi Azad, the Man Friday to Indira Gandhi, Sanjay Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, Narasimha Rao, Manmohan Singh and who maintained a vast network of friends cutting across party lines. "Azaad", the autobiography of Ghulam Nabi Azad tells the readers about the degeneration suffered by the Indian National Congress over the last three decades.

The release of "Azaad" was followed by the exit of Kiran Kumar Reddy, the last chief minister of united Andhra Pradesh and Anil Antony, son of A K Antony, former defence minister and the senior most Congress leader from the GOP to join the BJP.

While Anil Antony's exit from the Congress and joining the BJP were in expected lines, it is not going to make any change in the fortunes of the Hindutwa party either at the national level or in Kerala. The BJP leadership can take solace in the fact that Anil is a brand name because of the Antony tag. Congress work-

ers in Kerala do not know much about him as he was one of the back-room boys of the party working in its digital media cell. The BJP leaders can claim that Christian community members are joining the party inspired by the charisma of Prime Minister Modi.

Though the BJP had tried luck by inducting Christians into the party, it is yet to make any impact either in Kerala or in the rest of the country. The Kerala media is full of reports about the attack on Christian priests and evangelists in the rest of the country by Hindutva zealots. Cardinal Baselios Cleemis (64), head of the Syro Malankara Catholic Church, who is in the race for the next

Pope, has already declared

that minorities, especially the in Congress now?

Christians, were not safe in India under the Modi administration. The legislation enacted by BJP-ruled States banning religious conversion has antagonised the Church as evangelization is the spirit that sustains the community. The possibility of Anil Antony adding to the kitty of

the BJP looks bleak. Congress started stagnating the moment the party leadership cut to size the regional satraps. There was a time when the party had the services of chieftains like K Kamaraj, K Karunakaran, Devaraj Urs, S Nijalingappa, Vasanth Dada Patil, Biju Patnaik, Atulya Ghosh, Sidharth Shankar Ray etc. Congress leaders like NKP Salve, and Vasanth Sathe, commanded respect not only in India but across the world. This writer remembers reading a news item about Salve's mission to bring the 1987 World Cup Cricket Championship to India. "With Salve in charge, there is no possibility of the World Cup going anywhere else," one of the top cricket managers had been quoted as say-

ing. Do we have such leaders

What Kiran Kumar Reddy told the media after joining the BJP last Friday is noteworthy. Congress does not have the right leaders in the right places. The party which was in power in Tamil Nadu till 1967 thanks to the likes of Kamaraj and C Subramaniam, has ended up as a doormat of the DMK. At best, the party could be described as the B team of the DMK. The BJP does not have much to celebrate over CR Kesavan, great-grandson of C Rajagopalachari, joining the party. Kesavan, who was in Congress from 2001 to 2023 left the party because of the cold-shouldering by the national leadership. There is nothing much to write about his contributions to Congress.

There never will be an India without Congress. But the party could be strengthened only by its leadership. Leaders should understand their drawbacks and shortcomings. Modi bashing alone will not make the party return to its days of glory. It is not yet

(The writer is a senior journalist with The Pioneer. The views expressed are per-

15. The visuals of a rural citizen trudging miles in desperation carrying the body of his dead wife on his shoulders must serve a purpose far larger than national selfrecriminations. The fruits of economics through value addition and leveraging science and technology are usurped by the urban clique to then deny the rural sector benefits of education, health and resources.

The National Rural Health Mission is a major instrument for the delivery of free health care. But this is a state subject and most of them are in very poor condition. India at present has one doctor per 1,700 people, as against say, one per 469 in the UK. No doctor is ready to take up a rural gauntlet, as he looks at the pie of 60% of national healthcare spent on towns and cities. As even the urban populace stood helpless in the pandemic, it underscored how ill-served has been rural healthcare, all along. Why do we fail to see that the key to the national health of this agrarian nation, is rural medical care?

India's spending on public health care is one of the lowest in the world at 4% of GDP and 8% of total expenditure while 60% is from private out-of-pocket expenses. India ranks 85th in 185 wherein 71.6 % is by the private sector with 26.7% by the government which allows little to rural needs.

R Narayanan | Mumbai

CONTROVERSY OVER IT RULES

Sir — India's Information Technology (IT) Rules have been under scrutiny since the introduction of the new IT Rules in 2021. The government aimed to regulate the digital world with these new rules, but they have been met with criticism from various media organizations, civil society groups, and social media platforms. The IT Rules, of 2021 replaced the previous IT Rules of 2011 and brought online news content and Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms within their ambit. They also broadened the scope of the intermediary oversight mechanism, classifying social media intermedi-

Setback in Mehul Chowksi case



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

It is a great setback for the people of India whose money has been pocketed as Mehul Chowksi, the diamantaire who is wanted in India in connection with Rs 13000 crore fraud cannot be removed from Antiqua and Barbuda as the country's High Court gave the ruling in his favour. The claimant, Mehul Chowksi in his civil lawsuit has argued that there is an obligation on the part of the defendants, the Attorney General of Antiqua and the Chief of Police to carry out a thorough inquiry and that he has an

arguable claim that he was subjected to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The court order has prohibited the removal of the Claimant, Mehul Chowksi from Antiqua and Barbuda's territory.

According to Nature Isle News, the defendant also claimed that the claim was frivolous. vexatious, and an abuse of the court's process. Collusion, forced abduction, removal from Antiqua and Barbuda, and assault are among the incidents detailed in the Claimant Mehul Chowksi's affidavits in support of the claim. The Claimant was forcibly transported to the Commonwealth of Dominica aboard a boat, as per the report of Nature Isle News.

The 63-year-old diamantaire is wanted in India in connection with a Rs 13,000-crore fraud in the Punjab National Bank (PNB). CBI in its statement said that it remains committed to returning fugitives and criminals to India to face the process of criminal justice.

Bhagwan Thadani I Mumbai

aries with registered users in India above a notified threshold as significant social media intermediaries (SSMIs). One of the most controversial provisions of the new rules was the constitution of a fact-checking unit by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY). The fact-check unit had sweeping powers to determine what was "fake or false or misleading" with respect to "any business of the Central Government." It was arbitrary

and a violation of freedom of expression. In June 2022, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology released draft amendments to the IT Rules, 2021 for public feedback. The draft amendments sought to address some of the concerns raised by various stakeholders regarding the rules. The final amendments, called the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2023, were introduced in April 2023. The

success of these rules and amendments will

depend on their effective implementation and enforcement.

Amarjeet kumar | Hazaribag

RELIEF FOR INDIAN MEDICAL STUDENTS

Sir — It is a happy development that most of the Ukraine colleges will begin online classes, bringing immediate relief to Indian medical students. They have vacated Ukraine on Feb 22nd, 2022. For the last 1 year and 2 months, their education has been disrupted due to the ongoing war there with Russia. Now the question is, why Indian government was not providing them, with virtual classes, by having cameras etc. paraphernalia in medical colleges of India itself? India cannot lag behind in spreading 1 to 1 cum TEAM's HAPPY development management, joyful success Solutions, peace, prosperity and progress. Madhu Nivriti PS | Secunderabad

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FIRST COLUMN STRATEGIES FOR FEMALE

Prioritising professional development can be game-changing strategy at work

ENTREPRENEURS



eing a small business owner requires nothing short of majoring in multitasking. Whether it's managing customers or country ning a budget, or navigating products and systems, it's often an allconsuming task. Throw in a family and a household to run and it's fair to say professional development is probably not on most women's to-do lists. However, the right kind of professional development can be transformational for women in business, and it doesn't always require a new degree

Consider these five practical strategies to help switch up your thinking and boost your productivity this year.

Work-life balance: The quest for work/life balance became a national conversation during the COVID-19 pandemic as many Indians were forced to work from home. A 2022 study from LinkedIn found 72 per cent of working women in India reject roles that don't allow for flexible working. Rather than seeking to explicitly balance work and home responsibilities and obligations, being more mindful about how you are spending your time can help to deliver better harmony. For example, could you strive to have more quality time rather than quantity with your partner, friends, or children? Can you lean on others during busy periods and accept that busy periods come in ebbs and flows? If you have perfectionist tendencies, can you reassess your priorities and be ok with some things sometimes being just, ok?



Listen to your feelings about imposter syndrome: That nagging feeling like you just aren't good enough or just can't do it might be a positive. Many senior business leaders today actively work to surround themselves with a network of people they can learn from and leverage their expertise. Finding yourself in a situation where you accept you don't have all the answers can often help you to engage with others who might be able to teach you something new.

Check in with how you are spending your time: If your to-do list never seems to be done, it might be time for a productivity review. Productivity experts suggest a great place to start is looking at your calendar every Friday to review the week just gone. How did you spend the bulk of your time? Was it focused on your core business priorities or is something less important becoming a time-suck? Stopping to perform this check each week can be a game-changer for your productivity and your to-do list.

Try to embrace failure: Many small business owners, particularly women, hold off on launching their businesses or making a change out of fear of failure. However, reframing failure as an essential part of the learning experience can help to remove the associated fears.

If you wait until your business idea feels perfect or your website is exactly right, you might never launch or miss the opportunity to learn from your customers about what they want.

Make your mental health a priority: Another by-product of the COVID-19 pandemic was a renewed business and community focus on building resilience and mental health. Educating yourself about mental health and checking in with your state of mind are important first steps to supporting yourself and your employees better. It's common for people to put off the things that best support their mental health – like exercise and mindfulness - when they are busy or stressed, but these are often the times when those strategies are the most impactful

Whether you are a one-woman operation or leading a team, prioritising your professional development can help lead to game-changing strategies at work and home. A focus on continuous improvement each day can help break down the barriers of learning a new skill and help you become a more powerful small business leader.

(The writer is President of, the International Division of GoDaddy)

Revisiting the Poona Pact



Ambedkar's fears have come true as the Dalits, Adivasi and minorities' political interests are not being addressed in Parliament, writes KC Tyagi and Pankaj Chaurasia



very year on April 14, Dr B.R. Ambedkar Jayanti is commemorated to honour the birth of B.R. Ambedkar, the architect of the Indian Constitution. His 132nd birthday was celebrated this year. He was a well-known statesman who fought for the rights of the Dalits and other socially back-

Ambedkar aimed to thrive in a just society where each citizen was granted the same equal significance and dignity. He believed that liberty, equality, and fraternity must be upheld to sustain egalitarian justice within a community, but the caste system in India is the biggest barrier to the idea of justice taking root in the Indian social structure which is why Dr Ambedkar prioritised caste for the justice of the oppressed group because the fundamental premise of basic social justice undermines social, economic, and political justice, as well as democ-

In 1932, the subject of whether the 'untouchables' should be granted separate electorates because they were not an intrinsic part of Hindu social structures but rather were a community with a distinct sociopolitical identity, sparked a heated dispute between Gandhi and Ambedkar. In modern India, many people have reframed the disagreements between Gandhi and Ambedkar into starkly contrasting narratives, with supporters of each man strongly criticising the other's views on caste and anti-caste campaigns. In this context, it is necessary to reexamine the Poona Pact, the agreement reached between Gandhi and Ambedkar in 1932, from a modern stand-

In 1932, Mahatma Gandhi and Dr B.R. Ambedkar signed the Poona Pact to cease the Dalit campaign for separate electorates in exchange for legislative bodies. This agreement brought together two of the most prominent leaders of the Indian liberation struggle, who disagreed on Dalit rights. The Puna Accord has always been criticised and debated. The demand for separate electorates for Dalits was raised for the first time in 1917, and it gained traction during the Round Table Conferences in 1930.

In 1932, the British government, which was hesitant to award separate electorates, proposed the Communal Award, which would have granted Dalits distinct elec-

torates. This concept, however, was rejected by Gandhi, who went on a death fast to prevent the introduction of separate electorates. It all came down to a fundamental difference in their points of view. While Gandhi saw caste as a social issue, Ambedkar saw it as a political one.

Following negotiations at Puna, Gandhi and Ambedkar signed the Poona Accord in September 1932. This arrangement reserved Dalit legislative seats rather than having distinct electorates. The Poona Pact, which brought together two of India's most well-known leaders and settled a contentious issue, was a significant turning point in the liberation fight. Detractors claim that the Puna Accord was a compromise because it did not contain separate electorates for Dalit representation. Critics claim that the reservation system has not provided Dalits with sufficient resources and opportunities for success. The Poona Pact dispute for Dalit rights in India is still relevant today.

Prabodhan Pol, Ambedkar's interpretation of caste hinged on his perception of the Dalit question as a political matter, not only a social one, as Gandhi did. "The Gandhi-Ambedkar dispute centred on how to interpret caste. Ambedkar asserted, for the first time in India's modern history, that caste was a political issue that could not be resolved just by social changes. Ambedkar stressed in his writings and speeches that political democracy was meaningless unless the so-called oppressed classes were equal partic-

Ambedkar preferred a rightsbased approach, whereas Gandhi preferred a faith-based and spiritual approach. Unlike Ambedkar, Gandhi believed that any exploitative connection could only be repaired if the exploiter changed his mind. As a result, he worked with upper castes to modify their beliefs. "I thus implore you not to deprive Hinduism of one final opportunity to make voluntary atonement for its wicked past." "Give me the opportunity to work among the Hindu castes," he urges Ambedkar. It is unclear why Gandhi took such a strong stance against separate electorates, and this is still debated today.

The legacy of the Poona Accord lingers on to this day for India's 300 million scheduled caste people, today, India accords scheduled castes (SCs) a proportional number of seats in Parliament and assemblies based on their population for instance, in the Lok Sabha, representatives of socially and economically disadvantaged communities are granted 84 of a total of 543 seats. However, Dalits are not particularly concentrated in any one region, which means that they are in the minority in the majority of these seats. This indicates that the majority of voters do not belong to the Scheduled Castes and that their influence is the deciding factor in elections, even though the majority of MPs do for this reason, many According to historian Ambedkarite intellectuals keep arguing that the way Dalits are represented has been badly distorted. Because of this, in a society that is heavily influenced by caste, it is impossible for a Dalit member of parliament to truly advocate for members of more oppressed castes because he or she is required to make concessions and appease members of higher castes.

A system like this deprives Dalits of actual leadership, and the community suffers as a result. Leaders are unable to be independent since they must rely on their party's vote bank to be elected. Many Dalit politicians and thinkers are aware of this shackle, and many Dalit politicians and thinkers think that the current system is not good for choosing real leaders. They think that we must make a lot of compromises and that the current arrangement is very different from what the Poona Pact originally proposed. Gandhiji made it possible for this to happen, but

Ambedkar's plan was very different. In 1932, Ambedkar joined the Poona Agreements, knowing its fatal defect and its outcome. So, in 1949, after independence and when drafting the Constitution, he pro-

posed a Dalit electorate and settle-

The way things are now prove that Babasaheb was right to be worried. In the 60 years since India became independent, it has become clear that the Dalits, Adivasis, and other minorities' political interests are not represented in the Parliament with the way elections work now. Even though some untouchable castes have improved in the 75 years since the Poona Agreement, many castes have lagged. Nonetheless, some castes in this class have maintained their progress today in all states. While certain castes have started to get involved with politics and democracy, many remain outside of the system. As a consequence, there have been more occurrences of violence against Dalits, and the situation has gotten worse. There hasn't been much of a change in the wa the community is represented in politics, and because of this, castebased Dalit parties have been soundly trounced by the BJP.

farmers, and members of the most backward castes have been the most negatively impacted by the authoritarian politics of the BJP that have resulted from this. Now, if we examine the state and trajectory of Dalit politics, it appears to be on the verge of collapse. The majority of Dalit leaders have joined the ruling party or have formed alliances with it. In hope of achieving social, economic, political and cultural justice and equitable representation for all oppressed castes, particularly Dalits, Tribals, and Most Backward castes also, we need to have a national discussion about a proportional system of representation for justice for all.

The Dalits, tribals, labourers,

(The views expressed are personal)

The mind needs detox too...

A mental cleanse or mind detoxification helps in clearing the mind to help find better focus and balance in life

hange isn't always easy, but is necessary to move forward. When the mind of an individual brims over with stressful thoughts and anxiety, it is not always easy to sort them out and determine what's causing the most distress. What matters the most is the need to detox or a mental cleanse.

A mental cleanse or mind detoxification is an exercise that helps an individual in clearing their mind to help find better focus and balance in their life. The human mind is often referred to as the monkey mind. Studies show that the average human mind has at least 50,000 thoughts every day, which means in every 1.2 seconds a new thought leads to many distractions. Today, we all are living in the era of busy-



ness, so mental and emotional toxins often go unnoticed and result in making the person a victim of stress, fatigue, over-commitment, communication breakdown, unhappiness, impulsive decisions, mistakes, errors and much more.

It is often believed that evolution and change are the keys to individual healing. Strengthening the process of elimination can help an individual deal with the problems related to their past and in current thereby making them feel lighter and motivated. There is no denying the fact that with day-to-day life comes lots of stress, negativity and anxiety so a person sometimes loses track of the positives. However, it becomes important to calm the monkey mind and one of the effective ways which can



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OUTSIDE OF THE

(KC Tyagi is a former

MP and JDU leader and

Pankaj Chaurasia is a

research fellow at Jamia

Millia Islamia

CASTES HAVE

help is by inculcating the art of mindfulness meditation. Meditation, deep breathing

ing mindfulness and relieve stress by teaching an individexercises and being self-aware ual to sit with distracting

thoughts, acknowledging them and letting the negative thoughts pass on their own. Today, mental health is something that is of utmost importance than anything and one doesn't need an excuse to give

a little extra love to oneself. Detoxing the mind by eliminating negative thoughts; eliminating negative emotions; setting boundaries; restoring mental health are a few such measures that can be taken by an individual to gain back the lost self-love and self-care. Being a people pleaser, all the time drains an individual's mental energy. Keeping the emotions bottled up and holding on to anger, grudges, resentments, etc also makes an individual's life miserable both physically and mentally.

Detoxification occurs on

venate the body and prevent degeneration. Not only the mind but physical health can also be improved with the help of detoxification. Carving out time away from a smartphone, accessing social media and a steady stream of texts, calls and emails; practicing the art of forgiveness and focusing on things that matter; adopting healthy sleep habits; engaging in exercises such as painting, journaling and many more are a few ways that can help in relieving stress and rejuvenating the body. Sometimes, all one needs to be happy is to live

various levels and helps reju-

in the current moment. Remember, many times people tend to give their thoughts too much power by overidentifying them. Also times come when the world

individual and they find themself caught up in negative energy. This should not be the case as no thoughts define an individual. One must never trade their authenticity for approval. Nothing else matters. When a person learns how to separate their emotions from their reality, they become really powerful. The only certain thing is to live in the moment right now. Learning to determine which thoughts are worth time and letting go of the dysfunctional and catastrophic ones is one of the key factors to be looked for and be successful. When a person finds herself caught in a busy day or anxious moment, one must pause and think about what and whom they are grate-

just gets too much for an

(The author is a teacher at a reputed school in Delhi)

4 Indians among 16 dead in massive Dubai building fire

Rour Indians, including a couple from Kerala, were among 16 people dead after a massive fire broke out in a residential building in Dubai that also injured nine others, officials said on Sunday.

The fire broke out on the fourth floor of the building in the Al-Ras area, one of the oldest parts of Dubai, and began

spreading to other areas, they said.
Sixteen people died and nine others were seriously injured, officials said.

The Indian Consulate in Dubai confirmed that four Indians were among the

"The Indian victims include Rijesh Kalangadan (38) and his wife Jeshi Kandamangalath (32). The others include Gudu Saliyakoondu (49) and Imamkasim Abdul Khader (43)," Bijender Singh, Consul, Consular and Labour, at the Indian Consulate, told PTI.

"We have received their passport copies through (Naseer) Vatanappally (an Indian social worker). We would like to express our heartfelt condolences to the



Char marks are seen after an apartment fire in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Sunday.

others who have reached out with support. We are coordinating with the local authorities for the repatriation procedures,"

Quoting Naseer Vatanappally, who was at the Dubai Police mortuary, the Gulf News earlier reported that four Indians, including a couple from Kerala, have been identified among the victims.

Two men from Tamil Nadu who

worked at the building, 3 Pakistani cousins and a Nigerian woman have also been

The Dubai Civil Defence Operations Room was notified about the fire at 12.35 pm on Saturday, officials said.

A team from the Dubai Civil Defence headquarters arrived at the site of the blaze and began evacuating residents in the

Syria's FM to revive diplomatic relations with Algeria, Tunisia

Syria's chief diplomat has started a visit to Algeria and Tunisia as part of efforts to revive diplomatic relationships in the Arab world, more than a decade after his country was globally isolated amid President Bashar Assad's brutal crackdown on mass protests against

Foreign Minister Faisal Mikdad was welcomed on Saturday in the lounge of Algiers airport by his Algerian counterpart Ahmed Attaf. In remarks broadcast by Algerian public television. Mikdad insisted that "relations between the two brotherly countries exist and will continue to exist beyond the vicissitudes of the situation."

"My visit will be an opportunity for discussions between the two countries on the latest developments in the region. We need to strengthen this bilateral relationship," he added.

Arab countries that did not cut off relations with Syria during the civil war that followed the 2011 uprising.
Mikdad notably praised

Algeria's help after the devastating Feb. 6 earthquake that killed tens of thousands in Syria and neighbouring Turkey.

He was also bearing a message from Assad to his Algerian counterpart, Abdelmadjid Tebboune, the Algerian official APS news agency reported.

The visit comes after Mikdad's visit to Saudi Arabia on Wednesday that led both countries to announce they were moving toward reopening embassies and resuming flights for the first time in more than a decade.

Syria was widely shunned by Arab governments over Assad's brutal crackdown on protesters in 2011. The breakdown in relations culminated in Syria being ousted from the

Reports: Militants kill 26 in Syrian countryside

Islamic State militants have killed 26 people who were foraging for wild truffles in Syria's Hama region, opposition and state media reported on Sunday. Amid the economic devastation of Syria's yearslong war, foraging for truffles can help people earn money, as the seasonal delicacy fetches a high price. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition media group based in Britain, said civilians and military personnel were among the victims of the armed attack in the eastern outskirts of the city of Hama, 115 miles (186 kilometers) north of the capital Damascus. State news agency SANA said that the attack was carried out by members of the Islamic State group. Despite their defeat in Syria in

March 2019, the militant group's sleeper cells still carry out deadly attacks both in Syria and Iraq where they once held territories

and declared a "caliphate."
Since the truffle hunters work in large groups in remote areas, IS militants have repeatedly preyed on them, emerging from the desert to abduct them, kill some and ransom others for money.In February, IS sleeper cells attacked workers collecting truffles near the central town of Sukhna, killing at least 53 people, mostly workers but also some Syrian government security forces. Earlier this month, six people were killed by a land mine planted by the IS in the southern Deir Ez-Zor province also while foraging for truffles, according to state-run news

G7 vows to step up moves to renewable energy, zero carbon

Energy and environment min-isters of the Group of Seven wealthy nations vowed on Sunday to work to hasten the shift toward cleaner, renewable energy, but set no timetable for phasing out coal-fired power plants as they wrapped up two days of talks in the northern Japanese city of Sapporo.

The officials issued a 36page communique laying out their commitments ahead of a G-7 summit in Hiroshima in

Japan won endorsements from fellow G-7 countries for its own national strategy emphasising so-called clean coal, hydrogen and nuclear energy to help ensure its energy security.

"Recognising the current

global energy crisis and economic disruptions, we reaffirm our commitment to accelerating the clean energy transition to net-zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050 at the latest," the communique says.

The leaders reiterated the need to urgently reduce carbon emissions and achieve a "predominantly decarbonized power sector" by 2035.

"We call on and will work with other countries to end new unabated coal-fired power genas possible to accelerate the clean energy transition in a just manner," the document

says.

The stipulation that countries rely on "predominantly" clean energy by 2035 leaves room for continuation of fossilfuel fired power.

But the ministers agreed to prioritise steps toward phasing out "unabated" coal power generation — plants that do not employ mechanisms to capture emissions and prevent them from escaping into the atmos-

US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry said the meetings were "really constructive."

"I think the unity for the goal that was expressed of phasing out unabated fossil fuels is a very important statement," Kerry said in an interview with The Associated Press.

The call to action comes as China and other developing

Kerry: No rolling back clean energy transition

Sapporo (Japan): So much has been invested in clean energy that there can be no rolling back of moves to end carbon emissions, US climate envoy John Kerry said on Sunday.

Kerry noted that if countries deliver on promises to phase out polluting fossil fuels, the world can limit average global warming to 1.7 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit), better than the worst case scenarios but still above the current limit of 1.5 C global warming above preindustrial levels.

"We're in a very different place than where we were a year ago, let alone two and three years ago," Kerry said in an interview with The Associated Press. "But we're not doing everything we said we'd do," he said, after attending a meeting of energy and environment ministers of the Group of Seven wealthy nations.

"A lot of countries need to step up including ours to reduce emissions faster, deploy renewables faster, bring new technologies online faster all of that

Kerry said the G-7 talks in northeastern Japan's Sapporo were "really constructive" in yielding a show of unity for phasing out use of unabated fossil fuels that emit greenhouse gases. A meeting on Thursday of President Joe Biden's Major Economies Forum, which

countries step up demands for more help in phasing out fossil fuels and stabilising energy prices and supplies amid disruptions from Russia's war on Ukraine.

The issue of setting a timeline for phasing out coal-fired power plants is a longstanding sticking point. Japan relies on coal for nearly one-third of its power generation and is also promoting the use of so-called clean coal, using technology to capture carbon emissions, to produce hydrogen — which produces only water when used for 40 per cent of the world's eco-



includes leaders of 20 nations that account for more than three-quarters of global carbon emissions, offers another opportunity for committing resources to the goal of reaching zero emissions by 2050, Kerry said.

"The United States and all the developed world has the responsibility to help the developing world through this crisis," he said. "Those countries will really determine what happens. If they will reduce, if they will take the lead, if they will start deploying the new technologies, if they will stop using the chance of winning this battle." Kerry held out hope for cooperation with China on climate despite friction over Taiwan, human rights, technology and other issues, saying he had a "very good conversation" with his Chinese counterpart,

nomic activity and a quarter of global carbon emissions. Their actions are critical, but so is their support for less wealthy nations often suffering the worst effects of climate change while having the fewest resources for mitigating such impacts.

Emissions in advanced economies are falling, though historically they have been higher — the United States alone accounts for about a quarter of historic global carbon emissions — while emerging markets and developing economies now account for more than twoas fuel. The G-7 nations account thirds of global carbon emis-

Flights out of Taipei delayed after China launches satellite

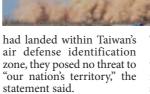
Taipei (AP): Flights out of northern Taiwan were delayed Sunday after China launched a rocket carrying a satellite that dropped debris into waters north of the capital Taipei.
While the satellite launch

had no obvious military pur-pose, it comes after China held large-scale military drills in response to Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen's transit visit to the United States earlier this month, during which she met U.S. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy in Tensions remain high

and China sent warplanes flying toward Taiwan more than 200 times last weekend, while its navy ships circled the self-ruled island it claims as Chinese territory to be annexed by force if necessary. Taiwan's Defense

Ministry issued a statement on public media, saying it had monitored the 9:36 a.m. launch from the Jiuquan base in northwestern China.

While some rocket parts



China had declared a 27-minute halt to flights over a section of the East China Sea, considerably shorter than the no-fly period over parts of three days it had originally announced. Taiwan said it strongly

protested the notice and was able to get China to reduce the flight ban time to the brief period on Sunday morning. Still, the flight ban

caused disruptions for trav-ellers headed to Japan from

Taipei's Songshan Airport. Lee Yang-ming, a 54year-old working in the medical industry, said he had lost an afternoon of sightseeing in Tokyo after his departure time was put back by two

"We had our schedule all planned," Lee said.

"That's ruined one day of our visit.

Recent Chinese exercises around Taiwan have been seen as a display of its ability not only to attack the island, but to cut off air and sea transit routes in the area that is among the most vital to trade and travel in the

EU leaders beat a path to Xi's door seeking help

In the weeks since Chinese leader Xi Jinping won a third five-year term as president, setting him on course to remain in power for life, leaders and diplomats from around the world have beaten a path to his door. None more so than those from

French President Emmanuel Macron made a high-profile state visit to Beijing last week accompanied by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, just days after Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez. German Foreign Minister

Annalena Baerbock arrived in the northeast port city of Tianjin on Thursday, following a visit by Chancellor Olaf Scholz in November. The European Union's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, would have been in China this week, too, but he tested positive for COVID-19. For the 27-nation trading bloc, the reasons to head to China are clear.

As an ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin, Xi could play a pivotal role in helping to end the war in Ukraine. The conflict has dragged

gy prices and inflicted more damage on economies struggling to rebound from the coronavirus pan-The Europeans want Xi's help. They want him to talk to Ukraine's

president as well as Russia's, but they don't see him as the key mediator. China's proposed peace plan for Ukraine is mostly a list of its previously known positions and is unacceptable, EU officials say. The EU also fears that Xi might

supply weapons to Russia. They've been particularly disturbed by Putin's plans to deploy tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus. That announcement came just days after Xi and Putin met to cement their "no-limits friendship."

Baerbock said the war is "top of my agenda." Praising Beijing for easing tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran, she said that "its influence vis à vis Russia will have consequences for the whole of Europe and for our relationship with China."

At the same time, the EU is

deeply concerned about a military escalation in the Taiwan Strait. China launched war games just after

South Korea repels N Korean | Saudi prince gives patrol boat after sea intrusion

South Korea's military says it fired warning shots to repel a North Korean patrol vessel that temporar ily crossed the countries' disputed Xie Zhenhua, just days earlier. western sea boundary while chasing a Chinese fishing boat.

The North Korean patrol boat crossed the so-called Northern Limit Line at around 11 am on Saturday while pursuing the Chinese boat in waters near South Korea's Baekryeong island but immediately retreated after a South Korean naval vessel fired warning shots, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said on Sunday.

While there were no exchanges of fire between the North and South Korean vessels, the South Korean high-speed vessel collided with the Chinese boat as it responded to the intrusion amid poor visibility, causing bruises and other minor injuries to some of the South Korean sailors. The Joint Chiefs of Staff said the South Korean military is closely monitoring North Korean military activities while preparing for various possibilities of provocations.

South Korea's navy has often fired warning shots to repel North Korean vessels crossing the countries' poorly marked sea border, but there also have been some deadly clashes over the years.

South Korea blamed North Korea for an attack on a South Korean warship that killed 46 sailors in 2010, but the North has denied responsibility. Saturday's intrusion came amid

heightened tensions in the region as the pace of both North Korea's weapons demonstrations and the US-South Korean joint military exercises aimed at countering the North Korean threat have intensified in a cycle of tit-for-tat.

The South Korean and US militaries will conduct another largescale joint exercise from next week involving some 110 warplanes, including advanced F-35 fighter jets

Seoul's Defence Ministry said the aerial drills, which will be begin Monday and continue through April 28, are aimed at sharpening combined operational abilities and demonstrating the allies' joint defence posture in the face of North Korean threats. North Korea last week staged one of its most provocative military displays in years by testlaunching what it described as a solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missile, which if perfected could potentially give the North a more powerful and harder-to-detect weapon targeting the mainland United States. South Korean officials also say North Korea has not been responding to South Korean calls on a set of cross-border inter-Korean hotlines for more than a week, which raises concerns about potential kinetic provocations as communications on those channels are meant to prevent accidental clashes along the rivals' sea borders.

4% Aramco stake to public investment firm

Dubai (AP): Saudi Arabia's crown prince announced on Sunday the transfer of a 4 per cent stake of the oil giant Saudi Aramco to a subsidiary of the kingdom's sovereign wealth fund, further boosting its coffers as the kingdom tries to expand its economy beyond oil.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's decision, announced by the state-run Saudi Press Agency, sends the stake to the Saudi Arabian Investment Co., known as Sanabil Investments. Sanabil is under the sovereign wealth fund known as the Public Investment Fund.

"The transfer will also solidify PIF's strong financial position and credit rating," the statement about the deal said. It gave no possible investment targets for either Sanabil or the PIF.

Saudi Aramco, formally known as the Saudi Arabian Oil Co., acknowledged the shares going to Sanabil. It said the Saudi government remains the oil firm's biggest shareholder, with over 90 per cent of its stock.

'This is a private transfer between the state and Sanabil, and the company is not a party to the transfer and did not enter into any agreements or pay or receive any proceeds from the transfer," Aramco said in a stock market filing.

Anti-govt protest in Prague

ple rallied again in the Czech capital on Sunday to protest high inflation and demand the government's resignation.

It was the second such rally at Prague's Wenceslas Square after one on March 11 that was organised by a new political party known as PRO under an against the poverty" banner.

The demonstrators, speakers at the protest and the head of the populist group, Jindrich Rajchl, blamed the European Union and the Czech government for soaring inflation and all repeatedly called on the current five-party coalition to resign.

"We want the government's resignation," Rajchl told the crowd. Rajchl, a lawyer by profession, is the former deputy head of the Czech soccer association.

"Resign, resign," the protest-"We're here to stand by our



His group, whose name in English stands for Law, Respect, Expertise has no seats in parliament. Rajchl claimed his group was ready to further escalate the

Inflation has been high but on the decline in recent months, dropping to 15 per cent in March, down from 16.7 per cent in February and 17.5 per cent the month before.

The protesters also want the Czech government to stop taking actions that are intended to

reduce misinformation and fake

Although Raichl rejected his group is pro-Russia, the protesters condemned the government's stance in Russia's war against Ukraine.

The Czech Republic has staunchly supported the government in Kyiv since Russian troops invaded Ukraine. The country has provided weapons for the Ukrainian military and taken in about 500,000 refugees.
Rajchl called Defence

Minister Jana Cernochova, a vocal supporter of the pro-Ukraine stance, "the biggest security risk for our country Some people at the rally were

the country quits NATO. Protesters were planning to march to the government office later on Sunday. Prime Minister Petr Fiala is currently on a trip to

signing a petition demanding

Many POWs freed as Ukraine marks Orthodox Easter

Kyiv (AP): More than 100 Ukrainian prisoners of war have been released as part of a major Easter exchange with Russia, a top official said Sunday, as Orthodox Ukrainians marked the holiday for a second time since Moscow unleashed its brutal full-scale war

While celebrations were subdued due to security risks, with a curfew barring the faithful from customary all-night services, Ukrainian authorities and ordinary people shared messages of hope, linking the story of Iesus' resurrection to their longing for peace and a Ukrainian victory.

Dozens of families had special reasons to rejoice, as presidential adviser Andriy Yermak announced that 130 soldiers, sailors, border guards and others captured by Moscow were on their way back home following a "big Easter prisoner exchange." Yermak said in a Telegram post Sunday

that those released included troops who

fought near Bakhmut, the eastern mining city

which has for months been the focus of

Russia's grinding offensive.

"The lives of our people are the highest value for us," Yermak said, adding that Kyiv's goal was to bring back all remaining POWs.

There was no immediate information on how many Russian prisoners were released, but the press service of the founder of the Wagner Group, the Kremlin-affiliated paramilitary force whose fighters are prominent in eastern Ukraine, also released a video Sunday showing Ukrainian prisoners of war being readied for an exchange.

The video, published on the Telegram messaging service, features Wagner founder Yevgeny Prigozhin instructing a soldier to prepare the Ukrainian captives to leave Russian-controlled territory "by lunchtime" on Sunday. The POWs are then shown boarding trucks and walking along a road.

In his Easter address released on Sunday morning, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described the holiday as marking "the victory of good, the victory of truth, the victory of life," and he stressed what he said was Ukrainian unity in the face of Russian



A woman and child hold candles during the Orthodox Easter religious service at the Patriarchal Cathedral in Bucharest, Romania, early on Sunday.

India ready to share strengths, success with world: Sandhu

India, the current G-20 president, is ready to share its strengths and successes with the world, its envoy here has said, asserting that the India-US partnership will not only benefit the two countries, but its rewards will be reaped around the globe.

India assumed the year-long presidency of the G-20 in December last year and aims to host a leaders' summit in New Delhi in early September.

The G-20 is an important forum of the world's 20 major developed and developing

"As the current president of the G-20, we are ready to share our strengths and successes with the world — from vaccines and skills to digital public good as well as what we learn from others," India's Ambassador to the US, Taranjit Singh Sandhu, said on Saturday while addressing a packed gathering of eminent Indian-Americans at the India House

Sandhu said Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Joe Biden's believe that democracies will deliver.

"Our cooperation today touches every conceivable

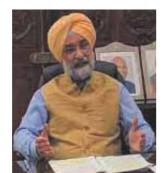
today touches every conceivable domain; we are working closely under Quad, I2U2 and IPEF. Our diaspora has given more wings to our dreams and more winds to our sails. Ultimately, it is people of both countries that drive the India-US partnership. Your success is our success. The success of the India-US partnership will not only be in the interest of India and the US, but also the global good," he said.

In January, India and the US announced partnerships in the fields of space, defence, semiconductors and next-generation technologies.

The bilateral agreement is another example of the US bolstering ties in strategic areas with New Delhi, while isolating

Addressing the gathering, Sandhu said: "The nature nudges us to celebrate togetherness what I will call is use of harmony, a true reflection of the diversity of India. Today we bring together different religions, cultures, and geogra-

He made these comments on a day when Navreh was being celebrated in Kashmir, Vaisakhi in Punjab and north India, Vishu in Kerala, Ugadi in



Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, Gudi Padwa in Maharashtra, Bihu in Assam, Poila Boisakh in West Bengal, Mahavir Jayanti, Easter, Ramadan, Eid and the Jewish festival of Passover.

"India is a beautiful garland of diverse colours. We love and enjoy each of these festivals in the spirit of spring," he said. Ambassador Sandhu also

paid glowing tributes to Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar, the architect of the Indian Constitution on his 132nd birth anniversary.

"Dr Ambedkar studied in Columbia University here in the US, which played an important role in shaping his thoughts and vision. We know people, three small words with the Indian and

Alabama (AP): Four people have been killed and multiple

people injured during a shoot-

firmation about what led to the

shooting. It was not immedi-

reflect the story of liberty, freedom, non-violence, and rule of law, that we both nourish and cherish as nations," Sandhu

Sandhu said, 75 years ago, when independent India was born, "we were a nation, fighting for our own survival. We had to depend on others, even for our basic needs, such as food. Neither history, nor geography, gave us comfort."
"Today, India is the fifth

largest economy globally; world's second largest agricultural producer; home to the third largest tech ecosystem in the world, creating a unicorn almost every week; running the world's largest renewable energy expansion programme; largest financial inclusion programme; the largest producer of generic drugs globally and the world's largest producer of movies," he added.

The event was attended by Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, Kurt Campbell, the Indo Pacific Coordinator of US National Security Council, General Atomics Chief Executive Vivek Lall, White House drug czar Dr Rahul Gupta and other eminent Indian-Americans.

Gunmen invade resort in central Mexico, kill 7

Mexico City (AP): A band of gunmen invaded a resort where dozens of vacationers were spending the weekend in central Mexico and opened fire, killing six adults and a 7-yearold, authorities said.

Officials in the Cortazar municipality in Guanajuato state said in a statement that an eighth person was seriously wounded in the midafternoon attack at the La Palma resort.

speculate on a possible motive. After the shooting, the attackers destroyed the spa shop and took the security cameras before fleeing, officials

The statement did not

Three women, three men and the child died.

A video posted on social media shows several people in swimsuits running about crying, screaming and hugging their children. Mexican soldiers and

police aided by a helicopter were searching for the attackers. Guanajuato, an agricultural and industrial hub, has been Mexico's most violent state for years. The Jalisco New Generation drug cartel has been fighting with local crim-inal groups, including the Santa Rosa de Lima cartel, which is apparently backed by the Sinaloa cartel.

India loves celebrating diversity: Sitharaman

India loves celebrating and Irecognising its diversity, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has said, as she paid glowing tributes to Dr B R Ambedkar, the architect of India's Constitution, at an event

"We always had this diversity. It's a country which loves celebrations. It's a country which loves celebrating and recognising its diversity," Sitharaman told a gathering of Indian-Americans at the popular India House, the residence of India's envoy to the US, Taranjit Singh Sandhu, at an event here to celebrate the New Year being observed across the country in multiple

"Even as we're doing all this per auspicious calendar, each one of us follow, either based on the Sun horoscope or moon horoscope. They're all around the same time. But based on the calendar year, April 14 marks the birthday of Dr. Ambedkar," she said.

"So here as I'm standing before, largely an Indian crowd, but of course senior officials of the US administration, when I say that India enjoys diversity, celebrates diversity, there can

always be times when there is friction here on days when you have so many different people of diverse backgrounds," she

The Finance Minister is in the US for the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank spring meeting. She said that Dr Ambedkar

stands out in distinction to show how, despite the background from which it comes, learned from his teacher, in fact took his teacher's name for his

Benefited by the scholarship given by a ruler of Baroda, he came to Columbia to do law. Came back and was a veritable fountainhead of so many different thoughts which constitution makers of India had, and the discussions were long and elaborated, post which India's constitution was ready, she

"They were eminent people in that group which prepared the Constitution of India. Dr. Babasaheb headed that group. And he's given the Constitution is what all of us would say we recognize him for the contribution that he's made," she said.

"It's not for me to highlight why I need to underline this when I'm talking about diversity. But because we are in the United States, I want to highlight that we celebrate the great leaders of our pre-indepen-dence era as well, Dr. Ambedkar stood for India, worked for Indians. He came from the oppressed Dalit community," she said.

"He belongs to them. But he came with a positive thought of being part of new India in the making and wrote the Constitution along with experts. So, when we celebrate diversity, celebrate inclusiveness, it also points out that we share a lot of positive thoughts when we are doing this. So today when we celebrate togetherness, it is that spirit that governs India and US relationship," Sitharaman said.

The event was marked by cultural performances showcasing India's cultural diversity, starting with Gurbani – kirtan – "Awal Allah Noor Upaaya....Kudrat Kai Sab Bande" by Bhai Sat Pal Singh ji, Bhai Onkar Singh ji and Bhai Karm Singh ji from Sikh Foundation of Virginia.

On Bhagwan Mahavir Jayanti, thoughts by Atmarpit Vidhiji, a scholar from Shrimad Rajchandra Mission Dharampur, Gujarat were

Narayan Prasad Saud becomes Nepal's new foreign minister

Congress leader Narayan Prasad Saud was on Sunday sworn in as Nepal's new foreign

President Ram Chandra Poudel administered the oath of office and secrecy to the newly appointed foreign minister at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here. Foreign Minister Saud's appointment comes ahead of Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda's proposed visit to India next month and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has started preparation for the entourage to the southern neighbour. The date and itinerary of the visit are yet to be made public.

The decision to appoint Saud as the Foreign Minister was taken last week during a meeting of the ruling alliance attended by CPN-Maoist Centre chairperson and Prime Minister Prachanda, Nepali Congress president Sher Bahadur Deuba and CPN-Unified Socialist chairperson Madhav Kumar Nepal.

Sixty-year-old Saud is also the central committee member of the Nepali Congress and he has been elected as the House of Representatives from Kanchan - a constituency in far-western Nepal. He had earlier served as Minister of State for Education and Sports and Minister for Irrigation. There are four ministers representing the Nepali Congress party in the Prachanda-led coalition government, though there was an understanding to give eight ministerial berths to the NC.

ing on Saturday night in Dadeville, the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency said. The Alabama Law Enforcement Agency said the shooting happened at about There was no initial con-

ately known if a suspect was in Pastor Ben Hayes, who serves as the chaplain for the Dadeville Police Department and for the local high school football team, said most of the victims are teenagers because the shooting occurred at a birthday party for a 16-year-

He said the shooting has rocked the small town where serious crime is rare.

"One of the young men that was killed was one of our star athletes and just a great guy. So I knew many of these



4 killed, many hurt in Alabama shooting

town and this is going to affect everybody in this area," Hayes

WRBL-TV reported that the shooting happened at a dance studio. The station showed images of crime scene tape around the Mahogany Masterpiece Dance Studio and neighbouring buildings and a

heavy police presence.
"This morning, I grieve

and my fellow Alabamians. Violent crime has NO place in our state, and we are staying closely updated by law enforcement as details emerge," Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey said in a statement posted on social media. Dadeville, which has a population of about 3,200 people, is in east Alabama, about 57 miles (92 kilometers) northeast of Montgomery, Alabama.

Two dead at cockfight in Honolulu Honolulu (US): Two victims

died after five people were shot during an altercation at a latenight cockfight on Friday in Honolulu, police said. Honolulu police respond-

ed to a call about shots fired just past midnight Friday and were searching on Saturday for a suspect believed to be in his 20s who allegedly shot the others who were attending the event, KHON-TV reported. "At the end of the fight a

group of males started arguing and then it escalated to a physical altercation, at some point gun shots were fired hitting the five people who were in the immediate area," Honolulu Police Department Lt. Deena Thoemmes told

'India-US people-to-people to get stronger, better' **PTI** ■ WASHINGTON US enjoys than with India," he said while addressing a gathering of hundreds of Indian

There is no stronger people-to-people ties between any country than what the US enjoys with India, a top White House official has said and observed that in many areas, governments need to get out of the way and let people from the two democracies work together. Kurt Campbell, the Indo Pacific Coordinator of US National Security Council, also said that the over the years the tow countries have built a "stronger relationship" that will only get better.

"This is not just a meeting of elites. It is not just about technology. It's not just about working together on security issues.

This is a relationship that is based at the people-topeople level. There is no stronger people-to-people ties between any country that the

ful connectivity between two people I've ever experienced. In many respects, we as governments really need to get out of the way. Get out of the way and let

Americans at an event organ-

ised here by the Indian

Embassy to celebrate the

"This is the most power-

country's diversity.

these people work together in so many different ways," he

In a world that has so many challenges and difficulties, it is wonderful on a regular basis to be able to see this relationship grow and thrive, Campbell said. He said it has been the greatest honour of his professional life for the last several years to

see this relationship come

Prime spot at King Charles coronation | Pakistan hikes petrol for army veterans, health workers

round 4,000 UK Armed AForces veterans and healthcare workers will be offered a prime viewing spot opposite Buckingham Palace in London for the Coronation of King Charles III, the British government announced on Sunday.

Around 3,800 seats will be created in a specially built grandstand in front of the Palace to host military veterans, workers from the statefunded National Health Service (NHS) and representatives of charitable organisations with links to Britain's royal family.

Additionally, 354 uniformed cadet forces will be offered the opportunity to



watch the royal procession at Admiralty Arch in London on May 6. "As a mark of the nation's profound gratitude, it is right that in celebrating the Coronation we include and champion those who have dedicated their lives to public service," said UK Culture Secretary Lucy Frazer.

The Coronation weekend marks the beginning of a new chapter in our national history and I'm delighted the procession will be lined by people and groups who contribute so much to our national life," she said.

The King's royal procession in London is due to travel along the Mall, through Admiralty Arch, along the south side of Trafalgar Square, before going down Whitehall through the east and south side of Parliament Square to Westminster Abbey for the ceremony. Invited guests and members of the public along the non-ticketed parts of the procession route will see the King and Queen Camilla travel from Buckingham Palace to Westminster Abbey in the Diamond Jubilee State Coach drawn by six Windsor Grey

price by Rs 10/litre

Islamabad (PTI): Cashstrapped Pakistan has hiked petrol price by Rs 10 per litre, amid the country's ongoing economic crisis and steep currency devaluation, further burdening citizens who are already hit by skyrocketing inflation.

After the latest revision, petrol price has now risen to Rs 282 per litre. Finance Minister Ishaq Dar announced the hike in a late-night live address, during which he said the prices of diesel and light diesel oil would remain unchanged at Rs 293 and Rs 174.68 respectively.

The price of kerosene was also hiked by Rs 5.78 to Rs 186.07. "The new prices will be effective from 12am on Sunday (April 16)," the finance minis-

Dar acknowledged these

revisions were necessary as prices of petroleum products increased in the international market over the past 15 days.

Oil prices spiked after Organisation of the Petroleum **Exporting Countries (OPEC** +), announced earlier this month that they would cut output. Debt-ridden Pakistan and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have failed to reach a staff-level agreement on the much-needed USD 1.1 billion bailout package aimed at preventing the country from going bankrupt.

The funds are part of a USD 6.5 billion bailout package the IMF approved in 2019, which analysts say is critical if Pakistan is to avoid defaulting on external debt obligations.

Two women among 3 booked on blasphemy charges in Pak

PTI LAHORE

Three people, including two I women, have been booked under blasphemy charges in Pakistan's Punjab province in two separate incidents, officials said on Sunday.

In the first incident in Faisalabad town, some 150 kms from the provincial capital Lahore, a woman introduced herself as Sanaullah - the prophet - in a video which went viral on social media on Saturday.

In another video, her sister Hina said that she is a witness to Sanaullah's claim, which is true. "We are ready to sacrifice our lives but will not back off my sister's claim that she is a prophet," Hina said in the

As the videos went viral, the members of radical Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) group gathered outside Hina's house in Faisalabad.

However, before they stormed into her house police reached there and controlled the situation.

The police arrested Hina and shifted her to an undisclosed location. Her sister was said to be in Lahore. Senior police officer Ali

Nasir Rizvi said both women have been booked under the blasphemy laws. He said a police team has

been sent to Lahore to arrest the main suspect. In another incident in Gujrat, some 170 kms from Lahore, police arrested a man identified as Jamil for claiming himself a messenger of God.

According to police, the

suspect entered a mosque at Puran village in Gujrat on Saturday and announced that he is a prophet.

When people present there admonished him over uttering 'blasphemous words' he got furious and took out a knife. He injured one person

before the people overpowered him and thrashed.

"Before the people lynched him, police reached there and took him into custody," a police official said, adding that the suspect has been shifted to an undisclosed location fearing

the mob might attack the police

station to take his custody.

Kamala Harris rallies as high court eyes abortion pill rules

AP LOS ANGELES Vice President Kamala Harris on Saturday urged Americans to take action during "a critical point in our nation's history" as thousands of protesters demonstrated across the country against new limits to abortion rights making their way through

the courts. Saturday's nationwide rallies were sparked by the U.S. Supreme Court's actions the day before, when the high court intervened to delay rule changes that would have limited the way the abortion drug mifepristone could be used and dispensed. The limits were paused while the court reviews the case more thoroughly.

Harris made a surprise stop in Los Angeles at one of the rallies, where she called tion rights a further incursion by conservatives into myriad ʻfundamental rights" many Americans thought they had. "And so this is a moment

that history will show required each of us — based on our collective love of our country — to stand up, and fight for, and protect our ideals. That's what this moment is," she said Saturday, speaking to several hundred demonstrators from the steps of City Hall. "When you attack the rights of women in America, you are attacking America.

Some of the protesters voiced their anger at the steps of the nation's high court, which took Friday's action at the request of the federal Justice Department. The agency asked the high court to lift restrictions on mifepri-

court in Texas earlier in the week. The decision by the appellate court reduced the window of time when the drug could be used and prevented the drug from being dispensed by mail.

Critics of the Texas and appellate court decisions, including pharmaceutical companies, viewed the courts' actions as a dangerous intrusion into the authority of the FDA, which regulates how medications are sold and used in the United States. Demonstrators in New

York City stood behind a sign with a four-letter expletive directed at Texas, where a federal judge set off the latest salvo in the battle over abortion. They held signs urging the government to defend medication abortions.

But the crowd was mod-



est, attracting a little more than 100 people outside the picturesque public library ong Fifth Avenue.

Still, the demonstrators attracted looks from passers-

by along the busy thoroughfare, some briefly joining the group to lend their voices. 'It can be hard to get peo-

ple out, because people are being bombarded with all

bodies and people are tired and poor," said Viva Ruiz, who said she helped organize 'The news cycle is so fast

that when one thing happens something terrible happens the next day. So it's hard to sustain the momentum or the energy for people to be on the streets," Ruiz said. With few exceptions,

many of the rallies - organized under the banner of a group calling itself "Bigger than Roe" — were held in smaller cities. Since last year's reversal of Roe v. Wade, the 1973 Supreme Court decision that legalized the right to an abortion, more than a dozen states have effectively outlawed abortion, while additional states have moved to further tighten abortion

dominated Florida Legislature moved to became the latest state to ban abortions after six weeks of pregnancy. Restrictions on the delivery and use of mifepristone, part of a two-drug regimen to end a pregnancy, would be a further blow to abortion rights advocates. The other drug,

misoprostol, can be used on its

own, but doing so is less

When mifepristone was initially approved, the FDA limited its use to up to seven weeks of pregnancy. It also required three in-person office visits: the first to administer mifepristone, the next to administer the second drug, misoprostol, and the third to address any complications.

drugs in combination.

If the appeals court's action stands, those would

which mifepristone could be dispensed. States that support abortion rights, including California and New York, have begun stockpiling misoprostol to assure their states have adequate supplies. Washington state is among

effective than using both Healey said the administration

is dedicating \$1 million to help providers contracted with the Department of Public Health buy additional quantities of mifepristone. More than 5.6 million women in the U.S. had used mifepristone as of June 2022, according to the FDA. In that period, the agency received 4,200 reports of complications in women, or less than one-tenth of 1% of women who took the drug.

those stockpiling a supply of

mifepristone or its generic

form. And Massachusetts

Democratic Gov. Maura

Power consumption grew 9.5% to 1,503 bn units in '22-23: Govt data

power consumption grew 9.5 per cent to 1,503.65 billion units year-on-year in 2022-23, mainly due to higher demand amid a rise in economic activities, showed government data.

Power consumption was 1,374.02 billion units (BU) in 2021-22, according to power supply data from the Central Electricity Authority (CEA).

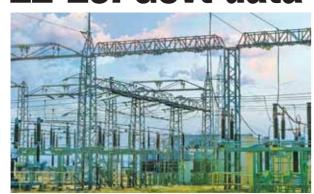
Similarly, the peak power demand or highest supply in a day also rose to 207.23 GW in the last fiscal, higher than 200.53 GW in 2021-22

Experts opined that power consumption and demand will see substantial improvement in

The power ministry has estimated peak power demand to touch 229 GW this summer.

The ministry has already issued instructions to import coal-based plants to run at full

It has also asked domestic



for blending to meet the unprecedented demand for elec-

The experts said the rise in power consumption clearly shows improvement in the economic activities in the country, which pushed the demand for

They also stated that had there been no rains in March 2023, the power consumption growth would have been in double digits in 2022-23.

was affected in March this year due to widespread rains in the country. Power consumption in March 2023 dipped to 126.21 BU from 128.47 BU in the year-

Power consumption from April 2022 to February 2023 surpassed the 2021-22 level.

Power consumption from April 2022 to February 2023 stood at 1,377.43 BU, higher than the 1,374.02 BU recorded in the entire 2021-22 fiscal.

CBIC may soon start automated system of publishing daily exchange rates for 22 currencies

 $T^{\text{he CBIC is likely to soon}}_{\text{introduce a system of pub-}}$ lishing daily currency exchange rates on the integrated customs portal, replacing the existing system of notifying rates fortnightly. The move would help capture daily exchange rate fluctuations and help importers and exporters to precisely calculate customs duties based on daily exchange rate.

Currently, Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) manually notifies exchange rates of 22 currencies every fortnight — 1st and 3rd Thursday of a month — based of rates obtained from the State Bank of India (SBI). The rate notified comes into effect from midnight of the following day.

An official said the entire process would be automated, beginning with forwarding of exchange rate data by SBI to ICEGATE.

The exchange rates received from SBI every day shall be adjusted to the nearest five paise and integrated with Indian

Indian economy not falling behind,

CS, Infosys results signal

see choppy 1-2 quarters

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

sequent recovery.

The results of top-tier compa-

I nies TCS and Infosys have

tripped on global uncertainties

and missed street estimates, set-

ting a subdued tone for Q4 show

by the IT pack, and experts see

choppy 1-2 quarters for the industry but are hopeful of sub-

ed on a sombre note with the Q4 scorecards that fell short of

expectations, but more impor-

tantly the management com-

mentary of India's top two IT

services companies was punctuated with words of caution

about prevailing customer sentiments across BFSI, technolo-

gy services and certain other ver-

ticals, particularly in the US.

spoke of "unplanned project

ramp downs and decision mak-

ing delays by some customers",

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS)

talked of some clients deferring

newer, non-critical initiatives.

Infosys director T V Mohandas

Pai says Q4FY23 will be sub-

dued for IT players but that

extent and impact will depend

on profile and strategy of indi-

with some hope of growth com-

in the US market is likely to

come down in April-June quar-

ter, and that new work will take

1-2 quarters to come by, so

"October-November will be bet-

ter time". Given that the Indian

IT industry is a major force in

the global tech arena in terms of

its size, scale and strength, it will

reflect realities of the market, he

"Five years back, the Indian

ing back in Q2 of this year".

He sees "a cautious Q1FY24

Pai believes uncertainties

vidual companies.

Industry veteran and former

While Infosys top brass

The earnings' season start-

subdued Q4 for IT pack, experts

Customs EDI System (ICES) for that currency is re-notified and published on Indian from the following day.

Customs National Trade Portal (ICEGATE) by 6:00 pm. "In order to capture exchange rate fluctuations more closely, the CBIC has decided to publish exchange rates of 22 currencies on ICEGATE website on a daily basis. Stakeholder consultations are on and the system would be introduced soon," the official told PTI. As per the plan, time efficient. on holidays when SBI doesn't The new system includes a

publish the rates, the prevailing At present, after fortnightly notification, if the exchange rate of a currency fluctuates more than ±5 per cent, the rate

The benefits of the proposed

system for determining and publishing exchange rates on a daily basis, experts said, will enable importers and exporters to make more informed decisions about their transactions. The exchange rates will be more accurate and reflect the current market conditions and would be

contingency plan in case of any technical snags or failures in electronic transmission, ensuring uninterrupted accessibility of exchange rates at any given



PSU banks set target for selling flagship Govt insurance schemes in FY24

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Public sector banks (PSBs) have set a target for the sale of flagship government insurance schemes Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJ-BY) and Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) in

Besides, they have also set goals for other financial inclusion schemes like Mudra Yojana and StandUp India Scheme.

There are about 8.3 crore beneficiaries under PMJJBY and 23.9 crore under PMSBY, as of now. Since the launch of the schemes in 2015, 15.99 crore enrolment has taken place under PMJJBY, while 33.78 crore under PMSBY as of March 31, 2023.

Last year, the finance ministry revised rates from Rs 330 to Rs 436 under PMJJBY and from Rs 12 to Rs 20 for PMSBY, effective June 1, 2022. The revision was being undertaken because of the long-standing adverse claims experience by the schemes and to make them economically viable.

According to sources, the ministry has asked banks to encourage customers to buy these policies for multi-years rather than renewing every year.

PMJJBY offers life insurance cover of Rs 2 lakh, in case of death due to any reason, to people in the age group of 18-50 years having a bank or post office account, who give consent to join or enable auto-debit of

On the other hand, the PMSBY offers insurance cover of Rs 2 lakh for accidental death or total permanent disability and Rs 1 lakh for partial permanent disability to people in the age group of 18-70 years with a bank or post office account, who give consent to join or enable autodebit of prémium.

Last week, the ministry held

a meeting with heads of PSBs

and financial institutions and urged them to push various financial inclusion schemes, including Jan Suraksha and Mudra Yojana. Department of Financial Services Secretary Vivek Joshi

exhorted the PSBs to achieve the targets allocated to them under the various schemes for financial inclusion in a time-bound To achieve saturation under PMJJBY and PMSBY, the fin-

ance ministry launched a threemonth campaign, starting April 1. Banks were advised to leverage their Banking correspondent network for outreach and enrolling potential beneficiaries.

Under the campaign, camps are being organised at the Gram Panchayat level across all districts in the country by the banks, with the active participation of the state administration and other ministries of the central government to ensure that the benefits of the two Jan Suraksha schemes reach the

Godrej Properties acquires 18 land parcels in FY23 to build new projects with ₹32,000-cr sales potential

PTI NEW DELHI

 $E^{\rm nthused\ by\ strong\ housing}_{\rm demand,\ realty\ firm\ Godrej}$ Properties Ltd has acquired 18 land parcels last fiscal for development of new projects with an estimated sales potential of around Rs 32,000 crore.

Mumbai-based Godrej Properties, which is part of business conglomerate Godrej Group, had given a guidance that for future development it would add land parcels that have sales revenue potential of Rs 15,000 crore. However, the company's new business development,

After pulling out funds on a net basis in 2022-23, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) started the current financial year on a positive note and invested Rs 8,767 crore in the Indian equities so

far this month on the reasonable stocks' valuation.

remain volatile, given the tight monetary policy Head of Equity Research (Retail), Kotak Securities

Ltd, said. The US Fed minutes have indicated an

interest rate hike by 25 basis points in the com-

ing policy meeting while voicing confidence in the

FPIs were buyers in all days of April so far, and

pumped a net sum of Rs 8,767 crore in Indian

7,936 crore in equities in March, mainly driven

by bulk investment in the Adani Group compa-

nies by the US-based GQG Partners. However, if

one adjusts for the investments of GQG in Adani

Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said.

India has been one of the best investment destinations for FPIs among emerging markets in April so far, VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment

Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director —

Manager Research, Morningstar India, attributed

According to the data with the depositories,

This came after FPIs infused a net sum of Rs

stability of the US financial system.

equities during April 3-13.

Group, the net flow is negative.

Going forward, FPIs flow is expected to

which means addition of new land parcels, jumped more than two-fold of annual guidance.

total estimated booking value of

FPIs begin FY24 on a positive note;

invest ₹8,767 cr in Indian equities in Apr

Godrej acquires land outrightly and also enters into joint development agreements with landowners to create a pipeline of future projects and expand its business. n a recent regulatory filing, the company presented its operational performance for 2022-23. Godrej Properties highlighted that it has added "18 new projects in FY23 with a total estimated saleable area of nearly 29 million square feet and

Likely to grow at 6.5% in FY24: Sanyal PTI NEW DELHI

Indian economy will grow at **L**around 6.5 per cent in the current fiscal and will continue to be the fastest-growing major economy in the world, notwithstanding a modest cut in growth projections by multilateral lending agencies, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) member Sanjeev Sanyal has said.

Sanyal further said that given the uncertainties in the global economy, India's performance is clearly far ahead of any

other comparable economy. "ADB (Asian Development

Bank) and World Bank have only modestly reduced the (growth) forecast for this year. Even after this reduction, India will still be the fastest-growing major economy in the world," he Recently, the World Bank

and the Asian Development Bank projected moderation in Indian economic growth between 6.3 per cent and 6.4 per cent due to a slowdown in consumption and challenging external conditions.



rates shall apply the next day.

Fund (IMF) also lowered India's economic growth projection for the current fiscal to 5.9 per cent from 6.1 per cent earlier. Yet India will continue to be the fastest-growing economy in the

"It is not correct to say that

nomic) growth will be somewhere around six and a half per cent range, which is a good performance under the current cir-Asked what it will take for India to grow at 8-9 per cent per annum, he said that due to the large number of reform mea-

we are falling behind, my own assessment is in line with what

the Economic Survey published

earlier this year that (India's eco-

sures taken by the Modi government, India's supply side is now capable of driving growth over

RBI's norms on outsourcing IT services aimed at improving corporate governance: Experts

at improving corporate governance and will protect the interest of consumers, say industry

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has recently come out with detailed norms for the outsourcing of IT services by banks, NBFCs and other regulated financial sector entities to ensure that such arrangements do not undermine their responsibilities and obligations to customers.

backdrop of the current practice port their business models and also the products and services being offered to customers.

Commenting on the Master Direction issued by the RBI on 'Outsourcing of Information Technology Services', Monish G Chatrath, Managing Partner, MGC Global Risk Advisory LLP, said, "Strong corporate governance practices and comprehensive risk management frameworks are aspects that are

These norms came in the imperative to enhance the resilience of the BFSI sector in Reserve Bank's regulation on of regulated entities (REs) of opment that is in the best inter-

> He further said the directions have brought under purview those IT & ITeS tasks that have the potential to significantly impact the business operations of regulated entities in the event of a disruption or compromise and those that can have material impact on the customers of the regulated entities in the event of any unauthorised access, loss or theft of customer

IN SHORT

POWERGRID NRTS-II PAYS HOMAGE TO AMDEDKAR Power Grid Corporation of India

Ltd. Northern Region Transmission System- II, Jammu, celebrated the 132th birth anniversary of Dr Bhimarao Ramji Ambedkar across its establishments in Northern Region-II. In these celebrations respectful homage was paid to the architect of Indian Constitution.



Lectures, quiz and various other competitions and cultural programmes were organized in which the life and contribution of Dr Ambedkar was highlighted. In one such event organised at its Regional Headquarters in Jammu, Rajesh Kumar, Executive Director (NRTS-II) was the chief guest. On this occasion Prof Dipankar Sen Gupta, University of Jammu and an eminent political economist, delivered the keynote address on the life and contributions of Bharat Ratna Dr Ambedkar.

SRM IST ACCORDED OBSERVER STATUS AT UN WATER

SRM IST was bestowed with the honour of "Observer Status" at the

United Nations Water Conference held at New York. Dr Paromita Chakraborty, Professor and Head of REACH - Center for Research in Sustainability Environment. Advocacy and Climate Change was an invited keynote speaker and panelist. SRM IST was specially accredited to take part in the

conference, held from March 22 to 24, for its extensive activities undertaken regarding water conservation, management and waterrelated research. Dr Chakraborty presented the outcomes of her research on "Challenges of the endocrine disrupting chemicals in the Transboundary River Ganga and scope for cost-effective, sustainable

Vodafone Idea awards ₹200-cr network order to Chinese firm ZTE

PTI NEW DELHI

a slew of factors for inflows, including stabilisa-

tion of the global scenario on the back of mod-

eration in apprehensions about the banking cri-

sis in the US and Europe. In addition, the valua-

tion of Indian equities has come to a reasonable

level following its consolidation, which prompt-

Naushil Shah — Investment Advisor, TrustPlutus Wealth (India) Pvt Ltd, said valuations

have become more palatable given almost zero

from the Indian markets in CY22 - thereby turn-

ing underweight (UW). India being a more sta-

ble economy compared to other emerging markets (EMs), FPIs are willing to pay a certain premium, since India has a potential to deliver healthy

returns over mid-to-long term horizon," he

"FPI had pulled out a record Rs 1.22 lakh crore

ed FPIs to invest in Indian stocks, he added.

NSE 50 returns over the last 17-18 months.

elecom operator Vodafone Idea has recently awarded a network gear order of around Rs 200 crore to Chinese company ZTE, three sources aware of the development said.

The company has given orders for broadband network equipment in telecom circles of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh-Chhattisgarh (MP-ĆG), the sources told PTI.

"Vodafone Idea has awarded an order of around Rs 200 crore to ZTE," one of the sources

The matter has been brought to the notice of the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS), which manages the Trusted Telecom Portal and provides clearance for permissible telecom gears, they added

An email query sent to Vodafone Idea elicited no IT companies were much smaller, they were samples and not the

universe...Now they have become the universe," Pai told PTI. The industry is today a greater force with USD 200 billion of exports, and the top 5 Indian IT companies are big players in the global market. "Whatever happens in the market will impact them...They

will reflect how the spending is in the economy because they have huge set of clients and the clients reflect spending in the IT universe," Pai said. ICRIER Chairperson and Genpact founder Pramod

Bhasin asserted that while the "softness" in earnings from the big IT firms is likely to continue for a few quarters, growth will return thereafter. "The softness in earnings

from the big IT firms is likely to continue for a few quarters more as many industries, specially tech, restructure and cut costs quite dramatically. In recent years, the tech industry has been a huge consumer of IT services as well as outsourcing. Some of that will, and has definitely slowed down," Bhasin

That said, "none of this will last beyond a few quarters and growth will come back for them and for our industry".

"The US economy remains surprisingly robust post-Covid and the markets, while cur-rently slow, will rebound quite easily from what ultimately is a mild recession. So we will have lower growth rates for a few quarters but certainly next year should be really strong as many customers are signing up pretty big contracts to further reduce costs," according to Bhasin.

The recent results from JP Morgan and Wells Fargo have been good and solid, and suggest that, at best, the US recession (if there is one) will be mild, he went on to add.



US emerges as India's biggest

trading partner in FY23 at USD

istry, the bilateral trade between India and the US has increased by 7.65 per cent to USD 128.55 in 2022-23 as against USD 119.5 billion in 2021-22. It was USD 80.51 billion in 2020-21. Exports to the US rose by

2.81 per cent to USD 78.31 billion in 2022-23 as against USD 76.18 billion in 2021-22, while imports grew by about 16 per cent to USD 50.24 billion, the data showed. On the other hand, during

2022-23, India's two-way commerce with China declined by about 1.5 per cent to USD 113.83 billion as against USD 115.42 billion in 2021-22.

Exports to China dipped by about 28 per cent to USD 15.32 billion in 2022-23, while imports rose by 4.16 per cent to USD 98.51 billion in the last fiscal. Trade gap widened to USD 83.2 billion in the last fiscal as against USD 72.91 billion in 2021-22.

Experts believe that the trend of increasing bilateral trade with the US will continue in the coming years also as New



Delhi and Washington are engaged in further strengthening the economic ties.

Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) President A Sakthivel said that increasing exports of goods such as pharmaceutical, engineering and gems and jewellery is helping India to push its shipments to America.

"The trend of increasing trade with the US will continue in the coming months also," he said.

FIEO Vice President Khalid Khan said India is emerging as a trusted trading partner and global firms are reducing their dependence only on China for their supplies and are diversifying business into other countries like India. "The bilateral trade between

country," Khan said.

India and the US will continue to grow as our exporters are getting good orders from that

25 startups keen on signing MoUs with Centres of Excellence: TN Govt

PTI ■ CHENNAI

As many as 25 startups have evinced interest to sign memorandums of understandings with the Centres of Excellence that were inaugurated by Chief Minister M K Stalin, the Tamil Nadu government said on Sunday.

The startups under the state government's 'Olir' (shine) initiative would be able to grow faster by utilising the state-of-the-art multi-sector Industry 4.0 Centres of Excellence at 'optimal costs' which has been established by the Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corporation (TIDCO) and Tamil Nadu Startup and Innovation Mission (StartupTN).

Stalin had inaugurated the

three Centres of Excellence --Tamil Nadu Smart and Advanced Manufacturing Centre (TANSAM), Tamil Nadu Centre of Excellence for Advanced Manufacturing (TANCAM) and Tamil Nadu Advance Manufacturing Centre of Excellence (TAM-COE) -- in 2022. These specialised institutions offer startups with the know-how to accelerate their design, prototyping and development.

Arsenal blow lead in West Ham draw

rsenal blew a two-goal lead for the second game in a row as Bukayo Saka's penalty miss proved crucial in the Premier League leaders' damaging 2-2 draw against West Ham on Sunday. Mikel Arteta's side struck twice in the first 10 minutes at the London Stadium thanks to goals from Gabriel Jesus and Martin Odegaard.

But just seven days after squandering a 2-0 advantage in their 2-2 draw at Liverpool, the Gunners again cracked under the pressure of the title race.

Said Benrahma's penalty reduced the deficit for West Ham before the interval and after Saka fired his spot-kick wide early in the second half, Jarrod Bowen volleyed in an equaliser for the struggling hosts. It was a hammer blow for Arsenal, who sit four points clear of second-placed Manchester City but have ceded the title race momentum to Pep Guardiola's team.

City had closed within three points of the Gunners after beating Leicester 3-1 on Saturday and it is the champions who have the destiny of the title in their hands despite trailing Arsenal for much of the season.

City, who have won their last 10 matches in all competitions, have a game in hand on Arsenal.

With a home game against Arsenal looming on April 26, City know they will lift a fifth title in six seasons if they win their remaining eight matches.

By the time Arsenal travel to the Emirates Stadium they will be seven points clear of City if they beat bottomof-the-table Southampton on Friday. Yet that gap would still look uncom-

fortably small to Arsenal fans fearing their team are in the process of wasting a golden opportunity to win a first title since 2004.

While City are battle-tested in handling the tension of the title race, Arsenal's young squad look to be suffering an ill-timed attack of nerves.

ARSENAL ANXIETY

Arsenal after they needed just seven minutes to take the lead as Ódegaard's

It could have been so different for



deft pass found Ben White, who delivered a low cross that Jesus slotted home at the far post.

Jesus's fourth goal in his last three games was followed by the Gunners' second three minutes later as they ruthlessly punished West Ham's woeful mark-

Gabriel Martinelli's pin-point cross found Odegaard in acres of space and the midfielder blasted a volley past Lukasz Fabianski from an acute angle six

The turning point came in the 33rd minute when Arsenal, looking a little over-confident after such a swagger-ing start, needlessly conceded a penal-

Thomas Partey surrendered possession to Declan Rice and when the West Ham midfielder picked out Lucas Paqueta's run, Gabriel Magalhaes' mistimed sliding tackle was correctly ruled a penalty despite Arsenal appeals for handball.

Mohamed Salah had missed a penalty against Arsenal last weekend, but they were out of luck this time as Benrahma sent Aaron Ramsdale the wrong way from the spot.

Michail Antonio's header was tipped over by Ramsdale moments later as Arsenal started to creak.

Saka should have eased Arsenal's mounting anxiety when Antonio conceded a 50th minute penalty with an outstretched arm that blocked Martinelli's

But instead Saka spiked the tension level even higher with a woeful spot-kick that completely missed hit the target, a costly blunder that recalled the England forward's Euro 2020 final penalty shoot-out failure against Italy. Saka held his head in his hands and

with Arsenal clearly rattled, David Moyes' side snatched an equaliser in the 54th minute. Thilo Kehrer guided the ball into the

Arsenal area and Bowen was just onside as his volley ricocheted off the turf and skidded past Ramsdale's despairing

Antonio nearly won it for West Ham in the closing stages, rising to head Benrahma's cross against the bar.



Napoli and Inter stall ahead of CL deciders

AP MILAN

Napoli dropped points ahead of the Champions League showdown against AC Milan following draw with Verona on Saturday, while Inter Milan were beaten 1-0 by Monza with Benfica looming.

Italy's champions-elect Napoli have had their imposing league lead cut to 14 points after a second-string XI could only manage a goalless stalemate with Verona and second-placed

Lazio won at Spezia on Friday.

As it stands Luciano Spalletti's side still need 11 points from their final eight matches to seal their first league title since 1990, but all eyes are now on Tuesday's second leg of their quarter-final clash with Milan in Naples in which they have to overturn a 1-0 deficit.

Not even the second-half introduction of returning star striker Victor Osimhen -- who smashed a volley off the bar in the 82nd minute -- and Khvicha Kvaratskhelia could force a breakthrough at a loud Stadio

Spalletti said that Serie A's top scorer Osimhen will start on Tuesday, adding: "He is a hero for these fans, there is always so much enthusiasm around him".

The draw was a fine result for struggling Verona which puts them three points behind Spezia, who sit just outside the drop zone.

Inter would have moved above both Milan and Roma had they beaten Monza but Luca Caldirola's 78th minute header condemned Simone Inzaghi's side to their 11 defeat of an immensely disppointing league season.

They are two points away from Italy's Champions League places, and risk not qualifying for the competition in which they should reach the last four on Wednesday.

Inter host Benfica hot

favourites to be in an all-Italian semi-final thanks to their impressive 2-0 win in Lisbon last week, but have lost their last three home matches without

Real waltz past Cadiz the shots and, finally, their 26th

 R^{eal} Madrid were made to wait, but eventually conjured a stylish 2-0 victory at Cadiz on Saturday in La Liga, ahead of their Champions League trip to face Chelsea.

Nacho Fernandez and Marco Asensio struck to help champions Madrid cut Barcelona's lead at the top of the table to 10 points, before the Catalans visit Getafe on Sunday. Both sides hit the wood-

work in the first half but Madrid overran their opponents, with keeping them at bay.

Eventually, when it seemed they had tried everything, Nacho broke the deadlock in the 72nd minute with a drive from distance, with Asensio adding another four minutes later.

"Good attitude, good commitment, good combinations, the team played very well," said Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti. "It was a game that could

have been a trap — the players were concentrating well, and we played well." Ancelotti rang the changes at the Nuevo Mirandilla to rest

players for the visit to Stamford

Bridge for the quarter-final sec-

ond leg, including veteran mid-

fielders Toni Kroos and Luka Modric and winger Vinicius

Emirates

Madrid suffered a 3-2 home defeat by Villarreal last weekend before the 2-0 first leg win over

Chelsea, and Ancelotti admitted his team were not motivated

On this occasion they arrived with the right mindset and on another day would have

ressica Pegula sealed victory for

the United States over Austria

on Saturday as the record 18-

time champions secured their

place in the Billie Jean King Cup

made quick work of Julia

Grabher, winning 6-1, 6-3, to

give the heavily favoured

Americans an unassailable 3-0

lead over Austria in their tie in

"I really wanted to clinch

Delray Beach, Florida.

World number three Pegula

AP PARIS

ended the first half several goals in front. Gil made stunning saves to

and Asensio. Madrid were racking up

deny Karim Benzema, Rodrygo

effort of the night went in. It came from an unlikely

source, in veteran defender Nacho, who drove home from the edge of the box into the bottom corner. With Cadiz's resistance bro-

ken, Madrid quickly added another. Fede Valverde carried the ball forward and fed Asensio, who finished clinically.

It was a satisfying evening for Ancelotti and his team, leaving them in good shape to continue their European adventure, aiming to finish the job in finals. Defeat leaves Cadiz 15th, four points clear of the drop

Elsewhere Inaki Williams scored twice as Athletic Bilbao beat Real Sociedad 2-0 in the Basque derby, giving a fiery San Mames something to celebrate after the team's Copa del Rey semi-final exit. La Real had the chance to

tighten their grip on fourth place after Villarreal, sixth, stumbled to a 2-1 home defeat by relegation-battling Real Valladolid, but fell short in Bilbao.

Real Betis beat struggling Espanyol 3-1 to move fifth, three points behind Imanol Alguacil's side.



PSG beat title rivals Lens

AP PARIS

brilliant Lionel Messi goal Ahelped Paris Saint-Germain to a 3-1 home win over Lens on Saturday to surely end any doubt about the outcome of this season's Ligue 1 title race, after an early sending-off left the visitors with a mountain to climb.

Lens, who began the day six points behind league leaders PSG in second place, looked the better team until Ghana midfielder Salis Abdul Samed was dismissed for a dangerous challenge on Achraf Hakimi in the 19th minute.

That changed everything, and by half-time the hosts were

SA sweep into BJK Cup Finals with France, Czech

out of sight thanks to three goals in the space of 10 minutes from Kylian Mbappe, Vitinha and then Messi, with Przemyslaw Frankowski pulling one back for Lens from a penalty.

Mbappe opened the scoring and Vitinha's long-ranger doubled PSG's lead in the 37th minute. Both goals were good but Messi's that made it 3-0 was stunning, the Argentine finding a pocket out of space outside the area, feeding a pass to Mbappe and then receiving the France striker's backheel return before slotting beyond goalkeeper Brice Samba and into the far corner.

The result leaves the reign-

ing champions nine points ahead with seven games left, meaning it is surely just a matter of time until PSG secure a French record 11th league title.

"We must not think that it's

done and dusted," said coach Christophe Galtier. "We will need to remain

serious and determined to maintain our lead and not give any hope to the teams chasing

The win comes at the end of a week overshadowed by allegations of racism against Galtier, who had already been under pressure since PSG's elimination from the Champions League last month.

Rublev wins first Masters title in Monte Carlo

AP ■ MONTE CARLO

Russia's Andrey Rublev fought back against Denmark's Holger Rune to win his first Masters 1000 title in Monte Carlo on Sunday.

The fifth seed rallied from 4-1 down in the deciding set to defeat sixth-seeded teenager Rune 5-7, 6-2, 7-5 after one hour 34 minutes on the red clay of Court Rainier III.

Rublev, 25, claimed the biggest win of his career after losing Masters finals in Monte Carlo and Cincinnati, both in

"I don't know what to say. Trailing 1-4, 0/30, then saving

chance to win. But somehow I did it," said the world number six, who blasted down 33 winners on the way to the 13th title of his career.

"I was hoping deep inside that I would have one chance," he continued.

"Play until the end. I remember the previous finals and when I was losing I thought I'd have no chance and mentally I was going down.

"But today I thought, 'Just believe until the end', and this is what I was trying to do in the third set, hoping I would have an extra chance to come back and what a way to do it.'

break points, thinking there is no today," said Pegula. "It's so much more exciting when you get to guarantee your team through." It was a second singles vic-

tory in 24 hours for Pegula after she followed up Coco Gauff's opening win over Grabher on Friday by defeating Sinja Kraus in straight sets.

Gauff skipped the singles game against Kraus but secured a 4-0 win for the Americans with a doubles victory alongside Caty McNally against Melanie Klaffner and Kraus.

Canada defeated Belgium 3-2 with Leylah Fernandez and Gabriela Dabrowski winning the deciding doubles game with a 6-1, 6-2 victory over Kirsten

Flipkens and Greet Minnen. In Saturday's singles games.

Minnen beat Katherine Sebov 6-2, 3-6, 6-3, and Fernandez fought back for a 4-6, 7-5, 6-2 win over Ysaline Bonaventure.

The Czech Republic saw off Ukraine 3-1, with Marketa Vondrousova earning the winning point against Katarina Zavatska 6-3, 6-4, after former French Open champion Barbora Krejcikova lost 3-6, 6-1, 6-4 to 38th-ranked Marta Kostyuk.

On Friday, 12th-ranked Krejcikova eased past Zavatska after 2019 Roland Garros runner-up Vondrousova dispatched Kostyuk.

The matches were played in the Turkish city of Antalya because of the war in Ukraine. World number five Caroline

Garcia sent France through with a 6-1, 6-7 (10/12), 6-1 win over Britain's Harriet Dart in Coventry. Britain, which reached the

ing Emma Raducanu, leaving 138th-ranked Dart as their top singles player. On Friday, Garcia and Alize Cornet had to play almost six hours between them to edge out



(7/4), 7-6 (7/2) and Dart 7-6

(8/6), 7-6 (7/3) respectively. Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina beat Poland's Katie Boulter 6-7 (2/7), 7-6 Magda Linette to wrap up vic-

tory for Kazakhstan. Rybakina won 6-4, 6-2 in

the third rubber in Astana having also won Friday against Weronika Falkowska when

teammate Yulia Putintseva defeated Linette.

Nuria Parrizas Diaz secured Spain's win over Mexico on clay in Marbella, breezing past 196th-ranked Marcela Zacarias 6-3, 6-0. In Stuttgart, Germany's

Anna-Lena Friedsam made up for losing the hosts' opening rubber by clinching the winning point with a 6-1, 6-0 thrashing of Brazil's Laura Pigossi.

Jule Niemeier earlier defeated Haddad Maia 7-6 (7/3), 3-6, 6-2. Italy got the better of Slovakia 3-2 as Martina Trevisan and Elisabetta Cocciaretto beat Viktoria Hruncakova and Tereza Mihalikova 6-4, 4-6, 7-5 in the deciding doubles. On Sunday, Slovenia earned

Kaja Juvan and Tamara Zidansek sealing a 3-2 win over Romania in the rain-interrupted decisive rubber. Defending champions Switzerland and 2022 runnersup Australia received automat-

their berth with doubles duo

ic qualification to the November 7-12 finals, which will feature four groups of three. The nine qualifying nations are Slovenia, France, the United

States, Germany, Italy, the Czech Republic, Kazakhstan, Spain and Canada.

A 12th and final team, yet to be determined, will receive an

2 WINS IN A ROW FOR MI

shan Kishan (58) and Suryakumar Yadav (43) led the charge as Mumbai Indians handed Kolkata Knight Riders a five-wicket defeat in their Indian Premier League match here on Sunday.

The fastest century in this year's IPL for Venkatesh Iyer — 104 off 51 balls (6x4s, 9x6s) — went in vain for KKR, who suffered their ninth defeat in 10 matches here at the Wankhede Stadium, and an overall 23rd in 32 matches against Mumbai Indians.

The highlight of Mumbai Indians' win was not just their sturdy response with the bat chasing 186, but their key middle-order batter Suryakumar banishing batting woes with a 25-ball 43 laced with four fours and three sixes.

Suryakumar also stepped up to lead Mumbai Indians in the game in which regular captain Rohit Sharma played as an impact substitute owing to a stomach bug as MI won with 14 balls to spare, finishing at 186/5 in 17.4 overs.

Tim David struck an unbeaten 24 off 13 balls with two sixes and a four as MI recorded a second successive win while chasing. The platform, however, was laid early by Kishan and Sharma, who went hammer and tongs from the second over onwards to add 65 for the first wicket in 4.5 overs, attacking the KKR pacers Umesh Yadav and Shardul Thakur in particular.

The first-wicket partnership looked ominous for KKR who managed to break through, with Yadav taking a fine diving catch at mid-on off Suyash Sharma in the

Sharma fell for a 13-ball 20 with two



sixes and a four after helping MI past 50run mark inside four overs.

On the other end, Kishan brought up his fifty in 21 balls with five fours and four sixes. His charge was stopped by Varun Chakravarthy, with the KKR mystery spinner cleaning up Kishan after a 25-ball 58 with five sixes and as many fours.

The rookie leg-spinner Suyash

claimed his second wicket in the form of Tilak Varma, in the 14th over, who played one onto his wickets after a 25-ball 30 (3x4s, 1x6s) having added 60 from 38 balls with Suryakumar for the third wicket. Earlier in the afternoon, Iyer's maiden century in IPL powered Kolkata Knight Riders to 185/6.

The 28-year-old India and KKR bat-

ting all-rounder Iyer waged a lone battle with the bat against Mumbai Indians, recording his highest score in the IPL as well as this season among all batters, hitting an overall six fours and nine sixes to bring up the second century of this IPL

edition from only 49 balls.

Iyer bettered the record set by Sunrisers Hyderabad's Harry Brook a

couple of nights ago in terms of fastest century this season, who made 100 from 55 balls against KKR.

While Iyer, who injured his knee at the start of his innings while attempting a ramp shot off Cameron Green, dominated the Mumbai Indians bowlers, none of the KKR top-order batter could trouble the scorers.

The blow was indeed painful as Iyer, playing in his third IPL season for KKR, hobbled between the wickets to complete runs, but the pain eventually subsided which gave the left-handed batter a change to play naturally. chance to play naturally.

In an innings replete with strokes hit all around the park, Iyer completed his maiden IPL century with five fours and

While most of the KKR batters did not last long enough, Iyer also did well to score heavily in his 48-run stand for the second wicket with Rahmanullah Gurbaz (8), 50 runs for the fourth wicket with Shardul Thakur (14) and 36 for the fifth wicket with Rinku Singh (18).

Nitish Rana (5) also had a game to forget with the bat, mistiming one to long on off Shokeen and walked away after exchanging a few words with the spin

KKR's latest sensation Rinku fell for a run-a-ball 18 with two fours and allrounder Andre Russell freed up his arms, scoring his first double-digit total after three games to finish on 21 not out from 11 balls (3x4s, 1x6s).

MI handed debut to Arjun Tendulkar who opened the attack and got the ball to swing back into the KKR right-handers, sending down two largely impres-

Rana, Shokeen rivalry spills into IPL



The rivalry between I two players in the Indian domestic circuit came to the fore at the IPL stage here on Sunday, with Kolkata Knight Riders' captain Nitish Rana and Mumbai Indians' Hrithik Shokeen engaging in a war of words in the first innings.

The incident happened in the ninth over of their match at the Wankhede Stadium

when the Mumbai Indians' bowler gave an earful to Rana after dismissing the KKR captain, who stopped in his tracks to turn around and hurl some words back at the

Shokeen had Rana caught at long on by substitute fielder Ramandeep Singh, and immediately looked in the direction of the batter to say a few words. But as Rana turned back to respond to the young player's charge at him, Mumbai Indians' stand-in skipper Suryakumar Yadav and the senior most player in the game, Piyush Chawla, stepped in to diffuse the tension.

It must be noted that both Rana and Shokeen are teammates in the Delhi side in domestic cricket, but they are not on talking terms even in the dressing room. The flare-up that happened on Sunday afternoon was not one-off since these two players have had a history



It's RCB vs CSK in IPL tonight

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Chennai Super Kings will look to pick up the pace in the middle overs and hope their inspirational skipper MS Dhoni takes the field despite a Royal Challengers Bangalore in the eagerly awaited Southern derby in the IPL here on Monday.

It will be a special atmosphere at the Chinnaswamy Stadium when the two teams battle to gain momentum after an up and down campaign so far. The knee has been troubling Dhoni since the start of the tournament but he has ended up playing all four games so far. CSK CEO Kasi Viswanathan expects the skip-

per to lead against RCB.
"I don't think he will miss the game but we will have to wait and see till tomorrow

evening," he said. Dhoni was seen limping a bit after the loss to Rajasthan Royals at home earlier this week, raising questions over his availability for the RCB game.

Even though Dhoni has been coming out to bat at number eight, he has managed to make an impact and almost took his team over the line in the last ball finish against the

Openers Ruturaj Gaikward and Devon Conway have been doing their job and Ajinkya Rahane too seems to have reinvented himself while

batting at number three but the middle-order needs to do more. The likes of Ambati Ravudu, Shivam Dube and Ravindra Jadeja have not been able to get going.

The bowling department they lost Deepak Chahar and now Sisanda Magala is expected to be out of two weeks at least. Star all-rounder Ben Stokes is likely to regain full fitness by end of the month.

RCB, on the other hand, got a much needed win on Saturday afternoon and will be aiming to build on the performance against Delhi Capitals

Virat Kohli's form has been the biggest positive for them. Skipper Faf du Plessis too has led from the front while batting at the top alongside Kohli.

Like CSK, RCB's middleorder is yet to unlock its potential. Glenn Maxwell has batted at an impressive strike rate but the likes of Shahbaz Ahmed and Mahipal Lomror can do better. After a stellar last season, Dinesh Karthik has under-performed in the finisher's role and will be itching to

change that. With the ball, Mohammed Siraj has been the stand out bowler and breathed fire in his opening spell against Delhi. The team would be hoping its death overs specialist Harshal Patel returns to his best having leaked close to 11 runs per over over the past four games.

Focus on Ponting's future. DC coaching staff could be trimmed next

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Capitals are likely to have a much leaner coaching staff next season with head coach Ricky Ponting's future set to be examined at the end of the As far as David Warner is

concerned, he has been the team's highest run getter and best performer and unless he himself wants to concentrate on batting alone, he will finish the season as skipper.

DC have already lost five

games on the trot in the ongoing IPL and if they lose to Punjab Kings on Thursday, they will be the first team to be out of play-off contention with half a dozen defeats.

In fact, the men who matter in DC franchise have already understood that the aim for this finish on a respectable note.

The Delhi Capitals coaching staff currently comprise Sourav Ganguly as Director of Cricket, Ponting (head coach), James Hopes (assistant coach), Ajit Agarkar (assistant coach), Shane Watson (assistant coach), Pravin Amre (assistant coach), Biju George (assistant coach).

Obviously, nothing will happen mid season but the poor result for two successive season will have it's share of repercussions when JSW and GMR, the two co-owners sit back and take stock of the season," an IPL source tracking the franchise said.

"So you will certainly not have this jumbo coaching staff next season for sure. There will be a few heads that might roll," the source added. The DC team was a formi-

dable one till 2021 when they were regularly qualifying for play offs for a few seasons.

With Prithvi Shaw, Shikhar Dhawan, Shreyas Iyer, Rishabh Pant, Shimron Hetmyer, Marcus Stoinis, Axar Patel and R Ashwin batting from Nos 1 to 8, it bears a formidable look.

It's a fact that the current Indian domestic line-up isn't something to write home about.

Sanju, Hetmyer script RR's win over GT

West Indies batter Shimron Hetmyer unleased his full fury on Gujarat Titans as Rajasthan Royals defeated the reigning champions by three wickets with four balls remaining in an Indian Premier League match here on Sunday.

With the win, the Royals

have broken the jinx of not having previously beaten the Hardik Pandya-led side in three outings and topped the table with eight The victory will be all the

more sweet considering the 2008 IPL champions were reduced to 4 for 2 at one stage, losing Yashasvi Jaiswal (4) and Jos Buttler (0), and were able to manage just 26 runs in power-

play.

The 26-year-old Hetmyer turned the complexion of the game, smashing an unbeaten 26ball 56. The knock was studded with two fours and five maxi-

the Sanju Samson-led side. Samson blazed away to 60 off 32 balls.

Pacers Mohammed Shami and Hardik Pandya had bowled well as Gujarat Titans made early inroads and pushed the Royals into a tight corner.

With 177 not looking like an imposing total to defend by any yardstick — against a team packed with batting stars like Buttler, Jaiswal, Samson and Devdutt Padikkal — the best option for Shami and Pandya was to make the ball talk. Long after Shubman Gill

(45) and Pandya (28) had come together to pull the Titans out of trouble with their 59-run partnership, the skipper bowled tirelessly in tandem with Mohammed Shami, whose searing pace and swing flummoxed the RR top-order batters.

Pandya induced Jaiswal to play an absurd short with the batter opening the face of the bat



stump to give Gill catching practice in slips.

With pressure mounting in powerplay -- and with the high standards the Royals have set in those make-or-break six overs -Buttler committed himself tentatively to a stroke he would otherwise not play.

The England while-ball skipper shuffled across his toward off stump and missed an attempted scoop over fine leg, resulting in his off stump being

uprooted from the ground.

It left the pair of Padikkal and Samson with the unenviable task of rebuilding the house from scratch. The 26 runs the Royals scored in powerplay was a testament to the nagging length Pandya and Shami

But then the rebuilding work stated in true earnest, with Samson and Padikkal (26) involved in a 43-run partnership and then the skipper forging a 59-run stand with Riyan Parag (5). The Hetmyer and Dhruv Jurel partnership then blossomed towards the business end with the West Indian doing the bulk of the scoring. There were some anxious

moments when both Jurel and Ashwin fell in quick succession, but Hetmyel completed the task with another massive six. Earlier, Gill's cool demea-

nour in the face of adversity and skipper Hardik Pandya's quick understanding of the situation again came to the fore as their half-century stand helped Gujarat Titans post 177 for seven.

South African left-handed batter David Miller (46 off 30 balls) and Abhinav Manohar (27 off 13) provided the final flourish, with a 45-run partnership that was studded with three

BCCI hikes cash prize for domestic tournaments

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The BCCI on Sunday announced an increase in prize money for the domestic tournaments with the Ranji Trophy winners set to receive a whopping cash reward of Rs 5 crore this year.

According to the new pay structure, Ranji Trophy winners, who currently get a cheque of Rs 2 crore, will be receiving Rs 5 crore, while the runners-up and losing semifinalists will get Rs 3 crores and Rs 1 crore respective-

"I'm pleased to announce an increase in prize money for all @BCCI Domestic Tournaments," BCCI secretary Jay Shah said in a tweet. "We will continue our efforts

to invest in Domestic Cricket which is the backbone of Indian Cricket. Ranji winners to get ?5 crores (from 2 cr), Sr Women winners Rs 50 lacs (from 6

The cash prize for Irani Cup too has been doubled with the winners getting 50 lakh instead of Rs 25 lakh, and while the team finishing runners-up currently don't receive any cash reward, they will get 25 lakh from now on.

In Duleep Trophy, the champions will get Rs 1 crore and runners-up team will be receiving Rs 50 lakh, while winners of Vijay Hazare Trophy will now be getting a cheque of Rs 1crore and the team finishing second best Rs 50 lakh.

Deodhar Trophy winners are set to get richer by Rs 40 lakh and the losing finalists will get Rs 20 lakh. Similarly, Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy champions will be receiving a cheque of Rs 80 lakh and the losing team will get 40 lakh.

In a big boost to women's cricket in the country, the winners of the Senior Women's One

Day trophy will get a cheque of Rs 50 lakh and the runners-up side will receive Rs 25 lakh.

The prize money of the senior women's T20 trophy has also been increased with the winners set to get Rs 40 lakh, eight times more than what they get now. The losing team will get Rs 20 lakh.

Indian cricket's 2023-24 domestic season will start with the Duleep Trophy tournament starting on June 28 while the flagship Ranji Trophy will commence from January 5 next

The Duleep Trophy, which will be played among six zonal teams, will be followed by Deodhar Trophy (List A) (July 24 to August 3), Irani Cup (October 1-5), Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy Men's T20 national championships (October 16-November 6) and Vijay Hazare Trophy (November 23-



Karunaratne, Mendis make Ireland toil in SL Test

enturions Dimuth Karuna-Cratne and Kusal Mendis made Ireland's wayward bowlers toil on Sunday to put Sri Lanka in a commanding position on day one of the first Test in Galle.

At stumps in hot and humid conditions in the sides' first Test series, the hosts were 386 for four with Dinesh Chandimal unbeaten on 18 and nightwatchman Prabath Jayasuriya 12 not out.

After winning the toss and opting to bat, captain Karunaratne completed his 15th Test hundred before making 179 while Mendis scored 140, his eighth ton in the five-day format.

Opener Nishan Madushka was caught behind for 29 off Curtis Campher to give the Irish an early breakthrough.

But Karunaratne and Mendis added 281 runs for the second wicket, beating the previous record in Galle of 253 set by India's Shikhar Dhawan and Cheteshwar Pujara in 2017.

Still seeking their first win

for the spinners, as is always the case in Galle, but the Irish bowlers failed to make the most

Sri Lanka were quick to punish the loose balls going at a brisk 4.39 runs an over as they took control of the game.

Babar & Haris script Pak's win in 2nd intervals after the tourists made only the sixth batter to do so in

Skipper Babar Azam smashed a magnificent century while pace bowler Haris Rauf took four wickets as Pakistan beat New Zealand by 38 runs in the second T20I in Lahore on Saturday. Azam, who fell for just nine

in his 100th T20I on Friday compensated with a brisk 58-ball 101 not out to lift Pakistan to a solid 192-4 in their 20 overs. Rauf, who took a career best

4-18 in Pakistan's 88-run win in the series opener, finished with 4-27 to restrict New Zealand to 154-

Pakistan now lead the five-

matches in Lahore (April 17) and Rawalpindi (April 20 and 24).

"I am very happy to perform in this match," said Azam, who is now the joint most successful T20I captain with 42 wins, alongside England's Eoin Morgan and Afghanistan's Asghar Afghan.

"I had two good partnerships and then our bowling was once again excellent. We have got experienced and exciting young bowlers who gave us back-to-back

Mark Chapman scored a battling 65 not out for New Zealand featuring four fours and as many sixes, but lost partners at regular



a decent start. Chad Bowes (26) and skip-

per Tom Latham (19) put on 44 for the first wicket in 6.2 overs, but as the asking rate soared New Zealand's chase lost steam. "We have been there or

thereabouts but weren't able to finish the innings off, both with the ball and bat," said Latham. "When Babar plays like that, you tip your hat off."

Azam was the mainstay of the Pakistan innings after he won the toss and chose to bat.

He smashed a six and two fours in the last over to reach his third T20I century, becoming

the shortest format at international level. Azam put on 99 for the opening wicket

Mohammad Rizwan, who

team added 65 runs in the last

scored 50 off 34 balls. Azam, whose knock included 11 fours and three sixes, then added 87 for the fifth wicket with Iftikhar Ahmed, who finished 33 not out as the home

five overs.

Only Chris Gayle of the after securing Test status in 2017, Ireland's bowling lacked West Indies has hit more hundreds in the format with 22, while India's Rohit Sharma leads penetration and there were too the T20I chart with four tons. many short and wide balls that

were duly punished. The partnership was final-

leg before wicket in the final hour of play. Former captain Angelo Mathews then fell for a three-ball duck, swinging hard at a wide delivery by leg-spinner Benja-

min White to be caught behind.

ly broken when Mendis missed

a sweep shot off the left-arm spin

of George Dockrell to be trapped

The second new ball brought about Karunaratne's downfall as he fell with six overs left for stumps, attempting a drive off Mark Adair without much foot movement and was caught behind. His 179 came off 235

balls with 15 boundaries.

During the knock, he became the fifth-highest run scorer for Sri Lanka in Tests going past the great Aravinda de Silva with now 6,409 runs in 85 There was turn and bounce

of the conditions and apply enough pressure.